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Near East and South Asia Review

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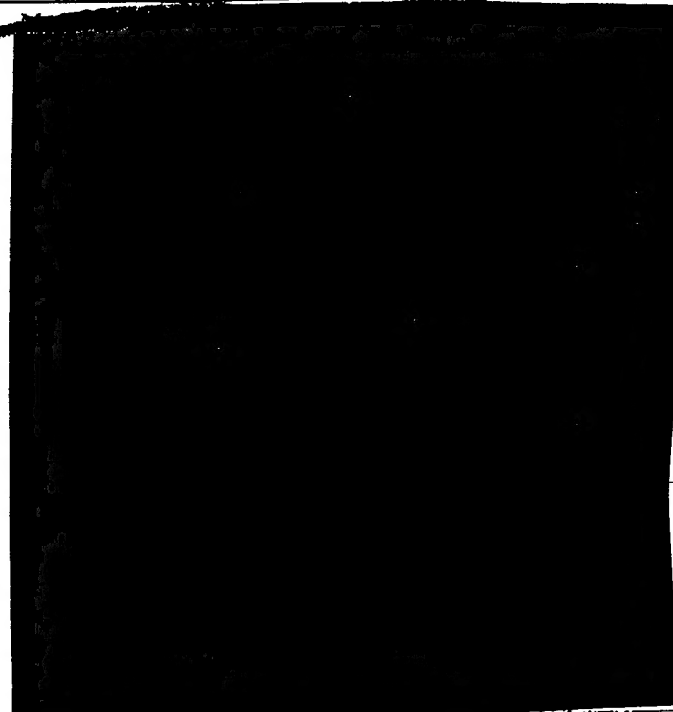
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Lebanon: The Theology of Power and the Power of Theology () 15

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Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, long recognized as the spiritual leader of and political spokesman for Lebanon's Shia Hizballah, spells out in his major work, *Islam and the Concept of Power*, his formula for implementing an Islamic republic in Lebanon. His writings indicate, however, that the preconditions for an Islamic state have not yet been met.

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Iran's Bazaar Merchants: Challenging Regime Policies

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Many Iranian bazaar merchants oppose government efforts to increase supervision and regulation of the economy and have responded by electing more conservative, traditional-minded clerics to the Majles, Iran's parliament. The success of the *bazaaris'* efforts and the deteriorating economy have forced the government to compromise on key issues.

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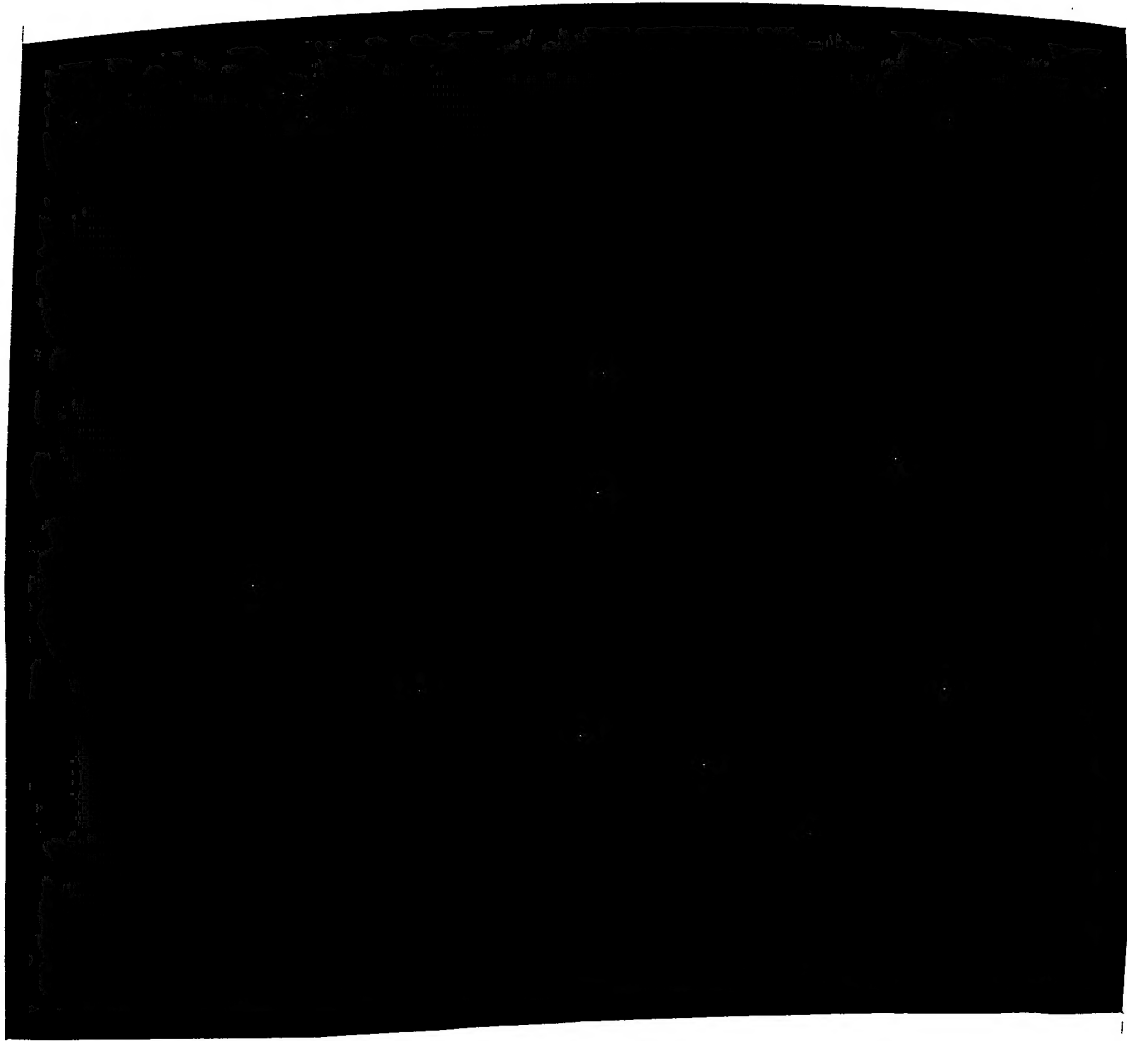
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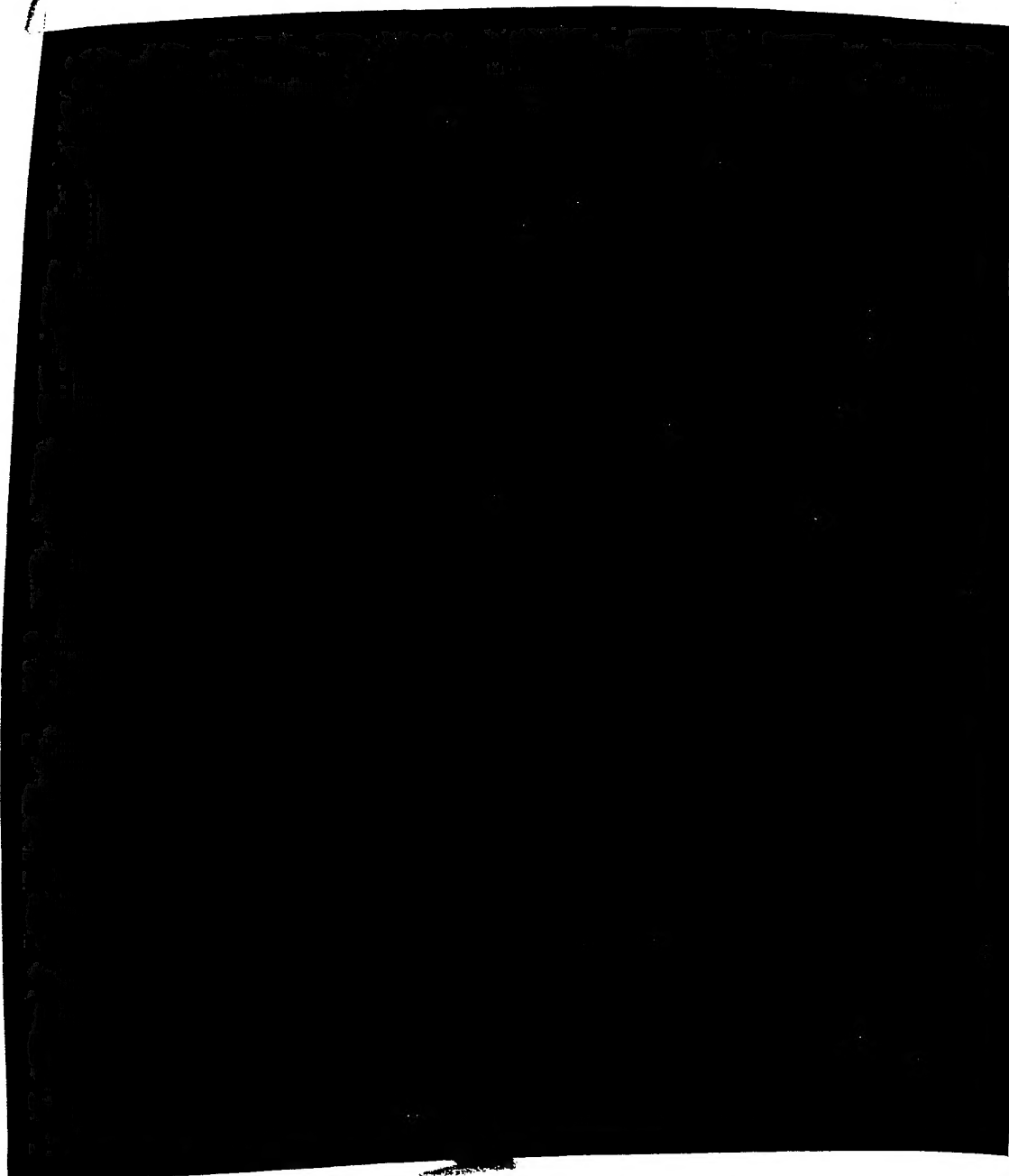
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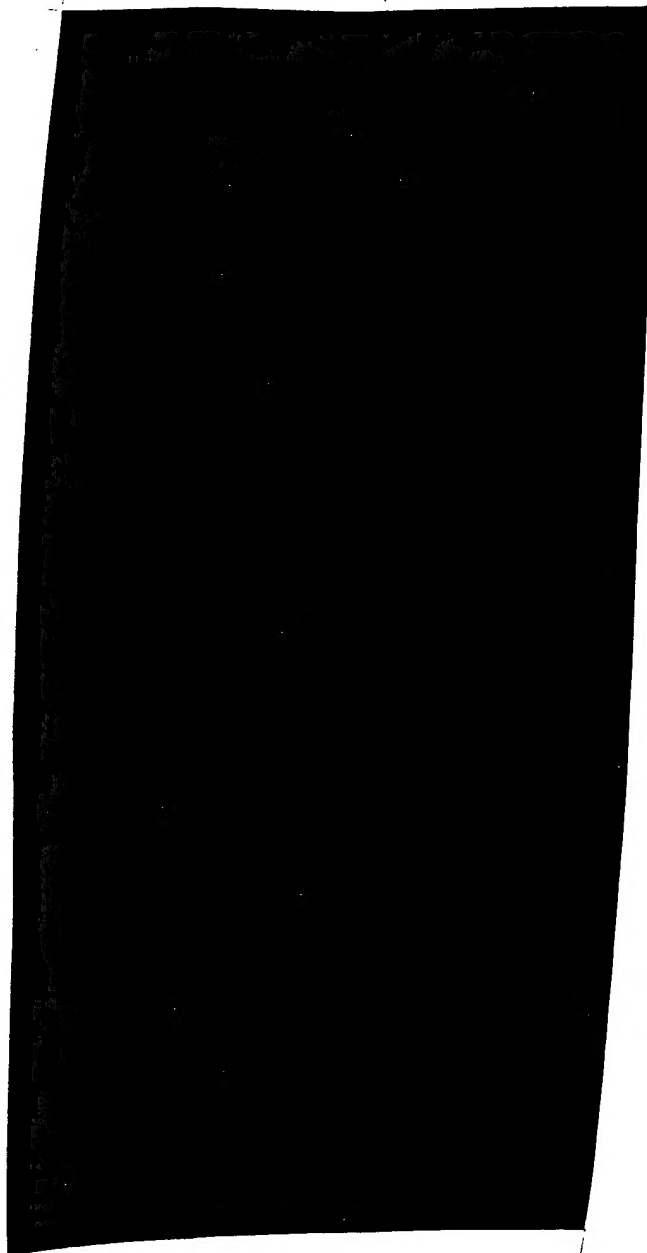
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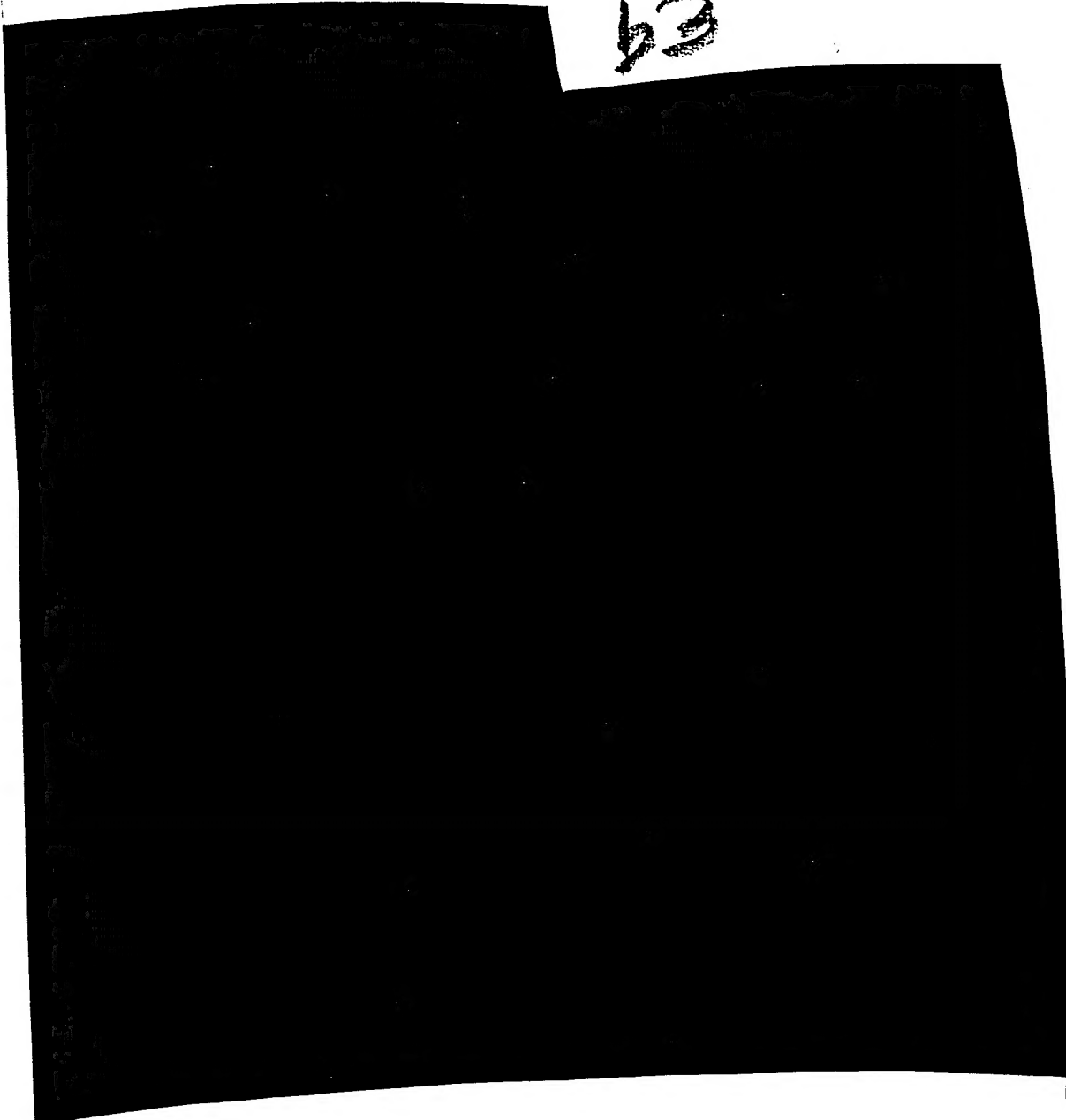
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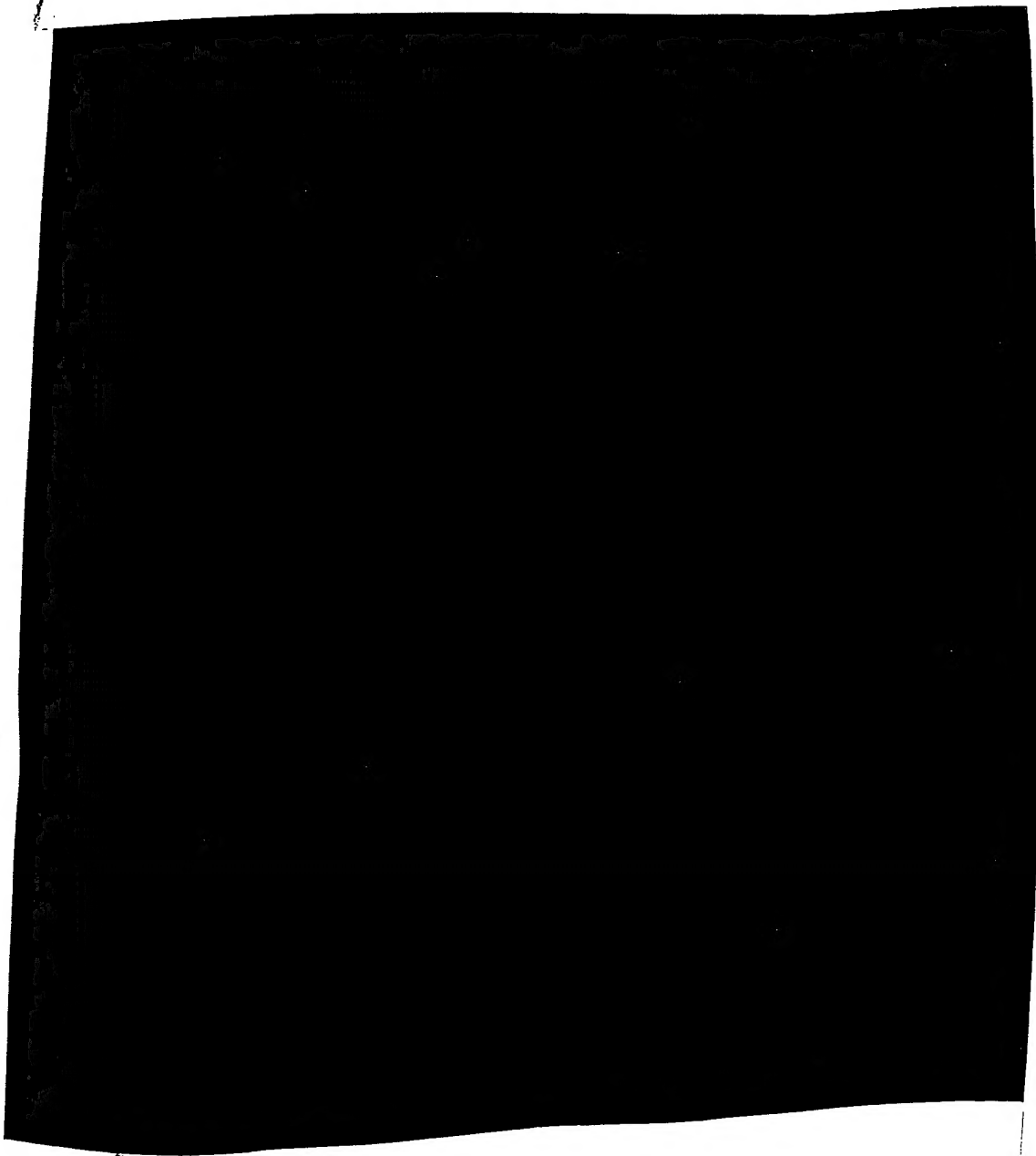
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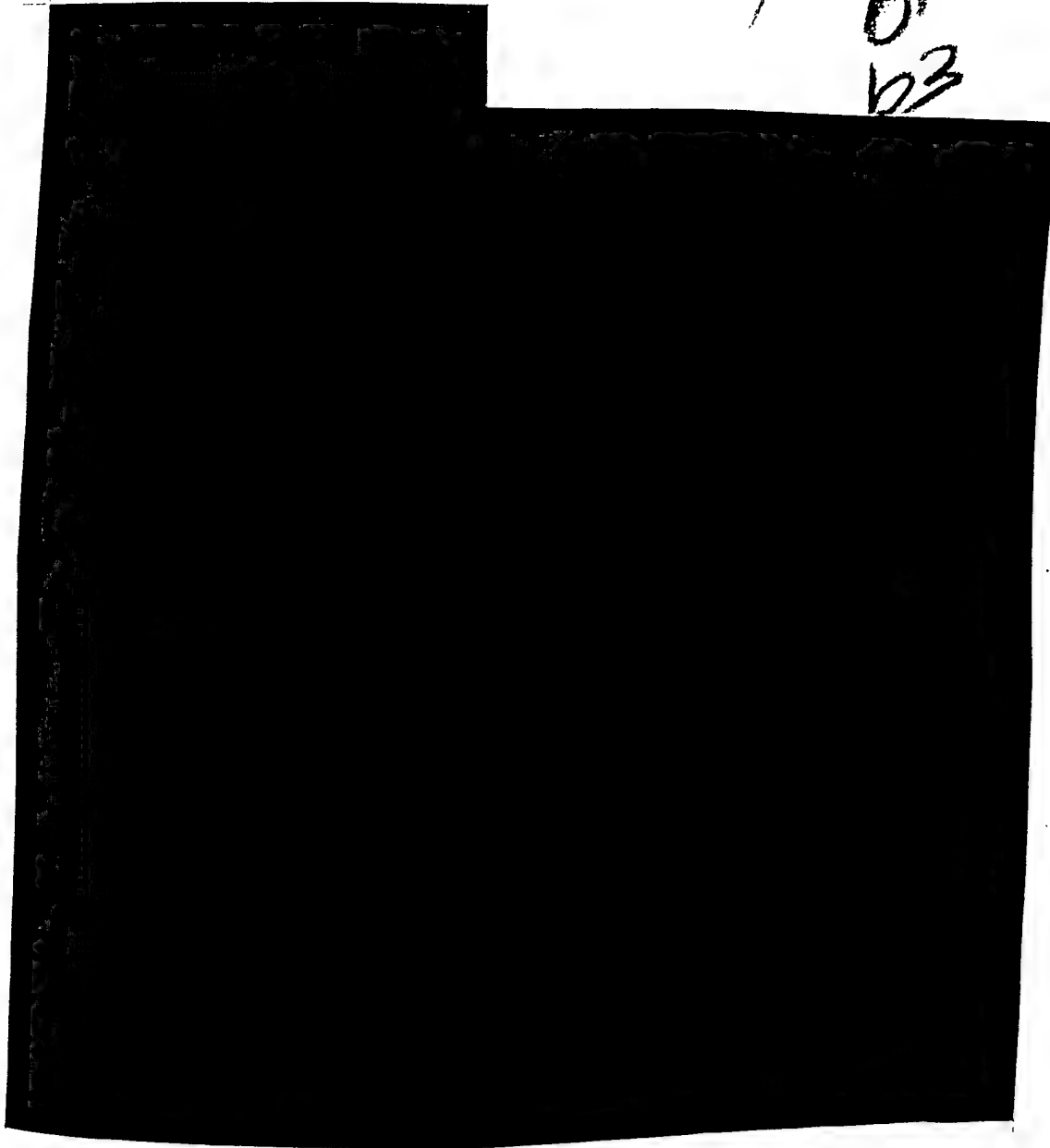
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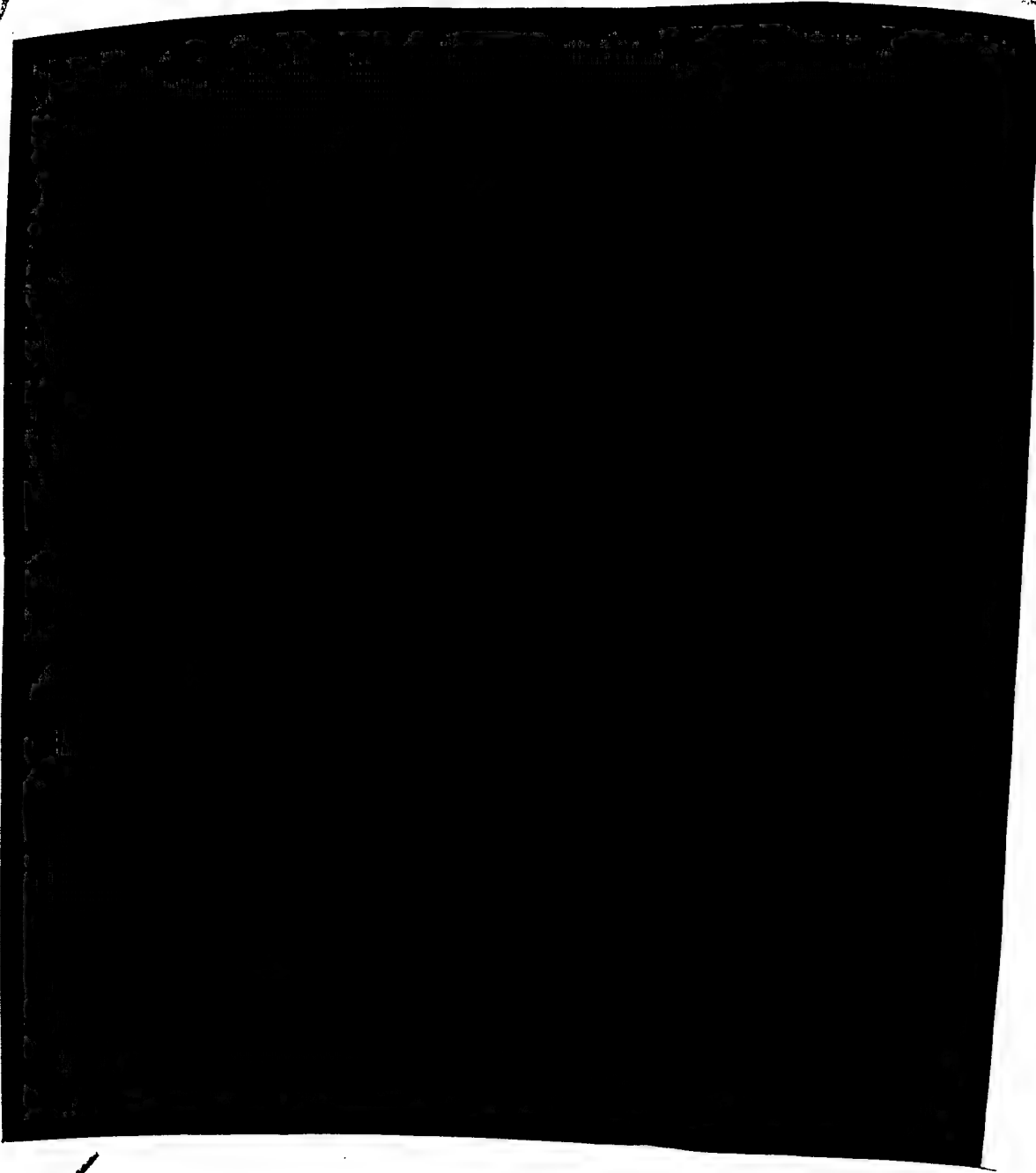
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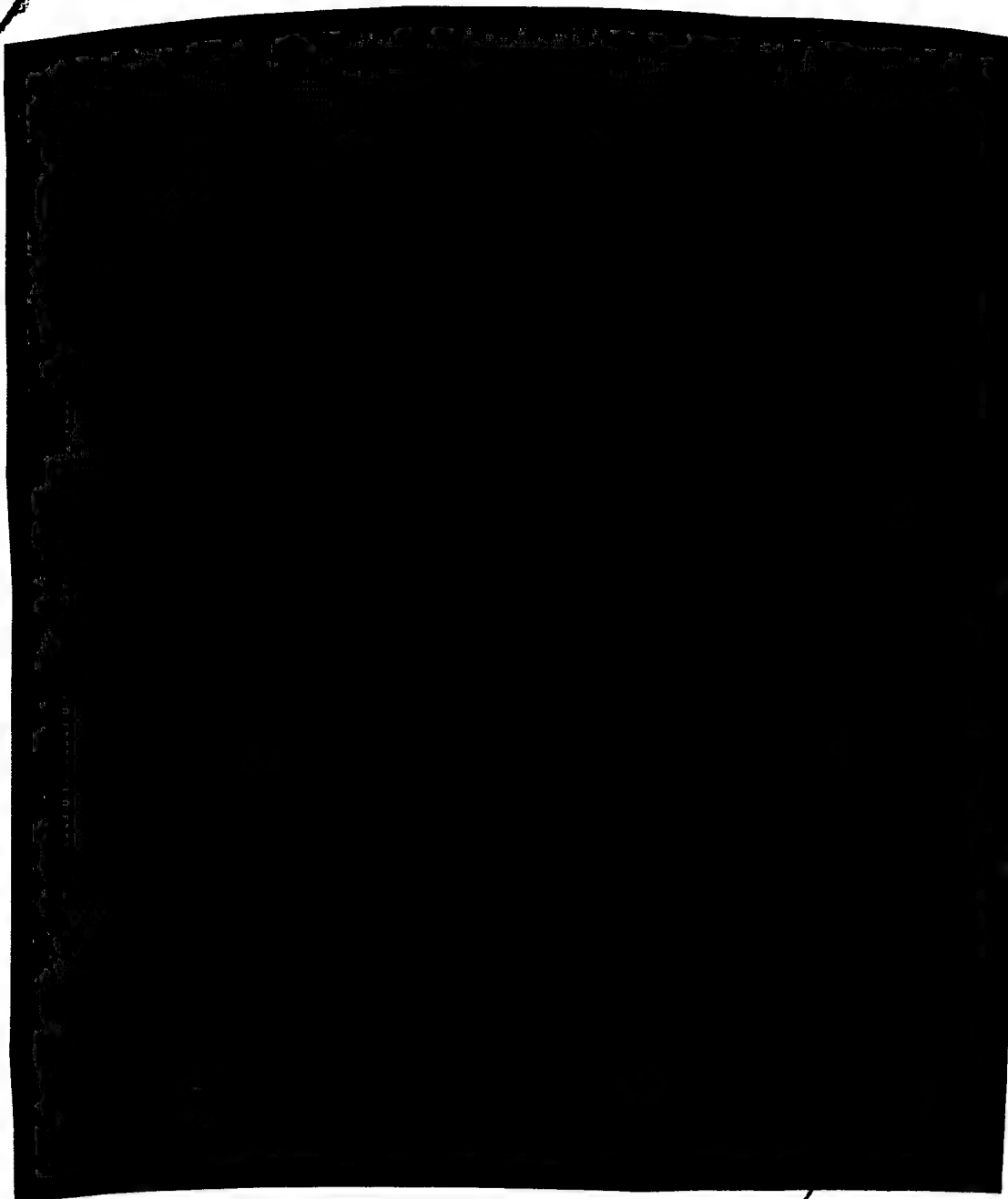


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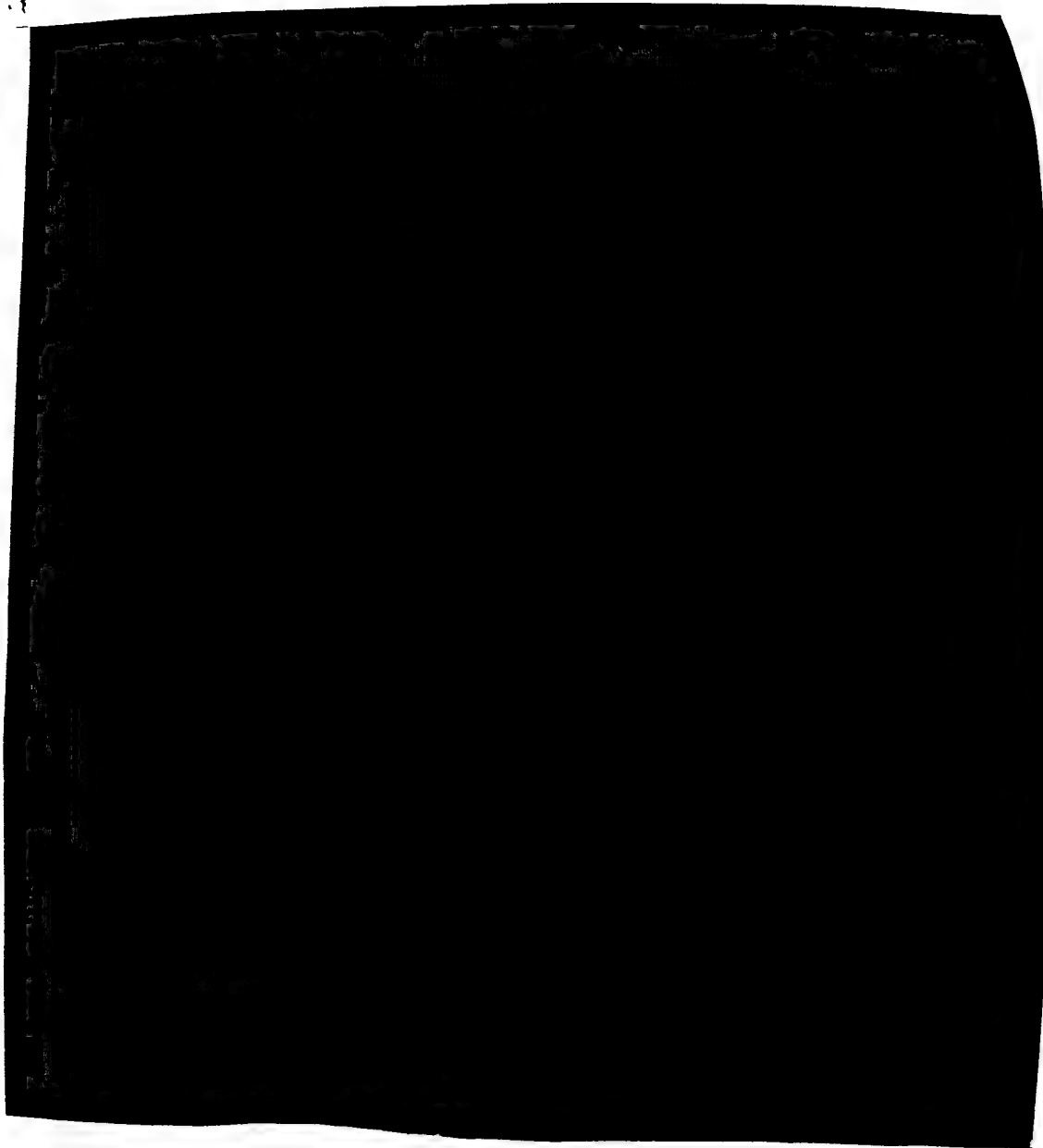
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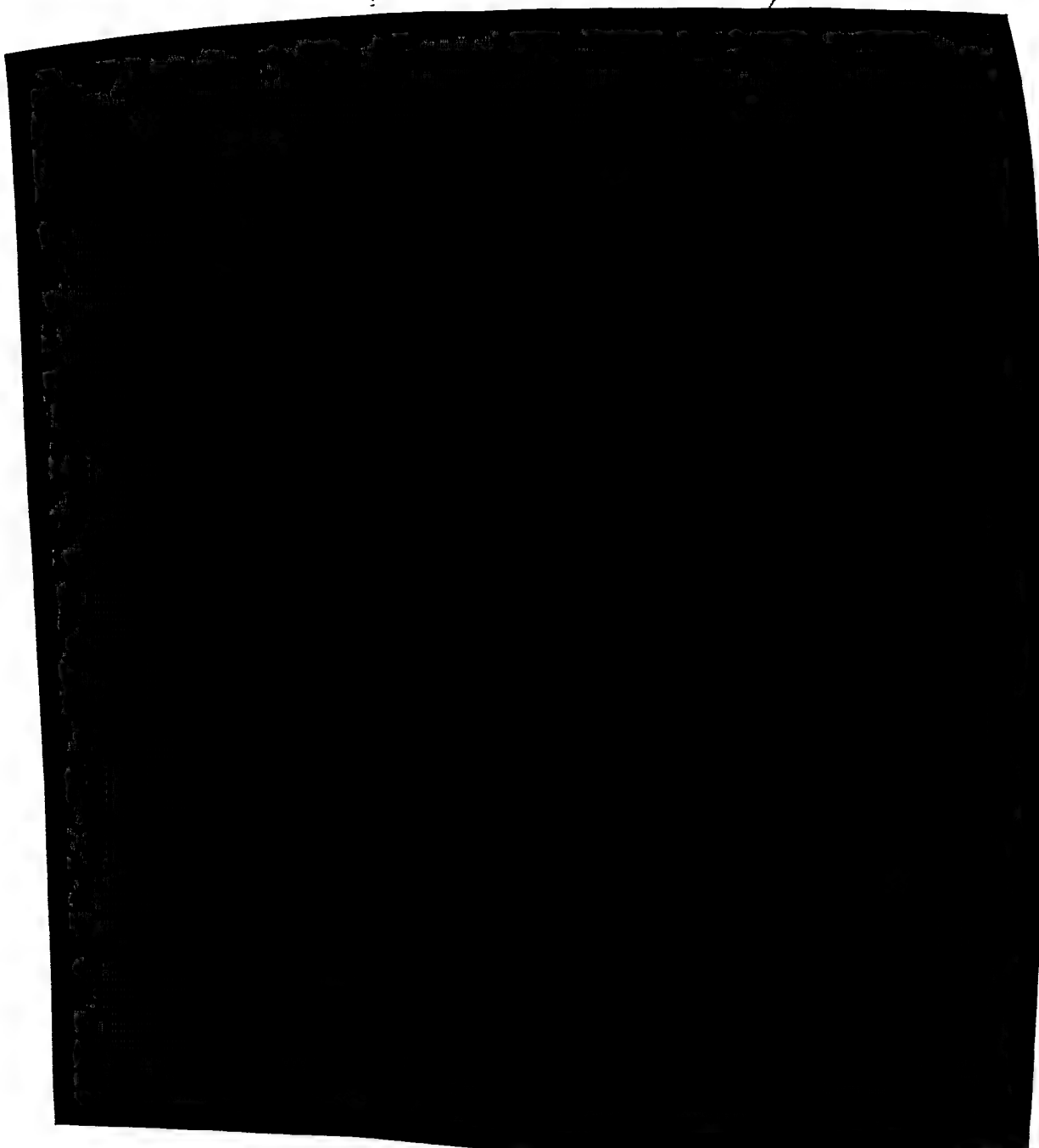
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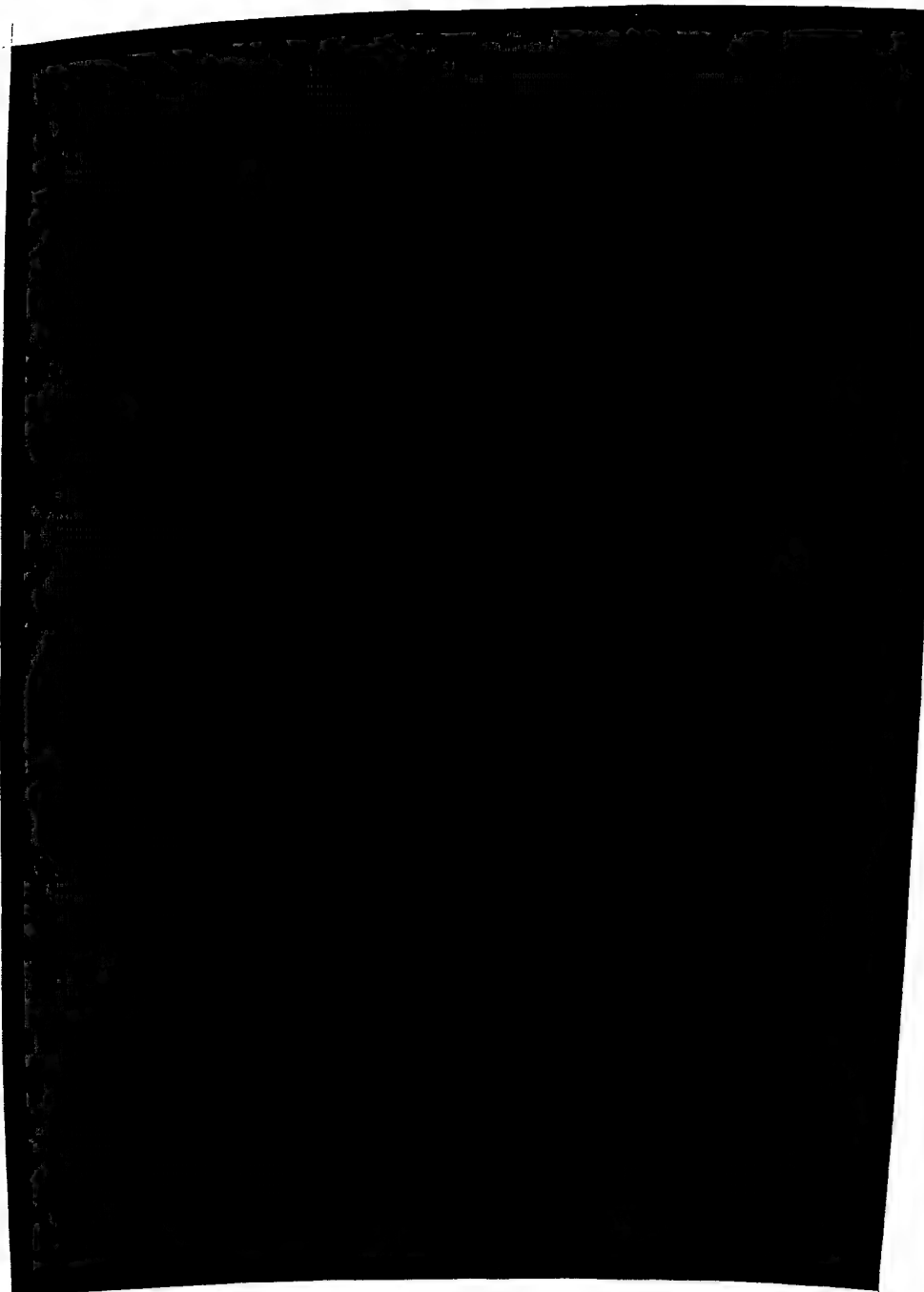
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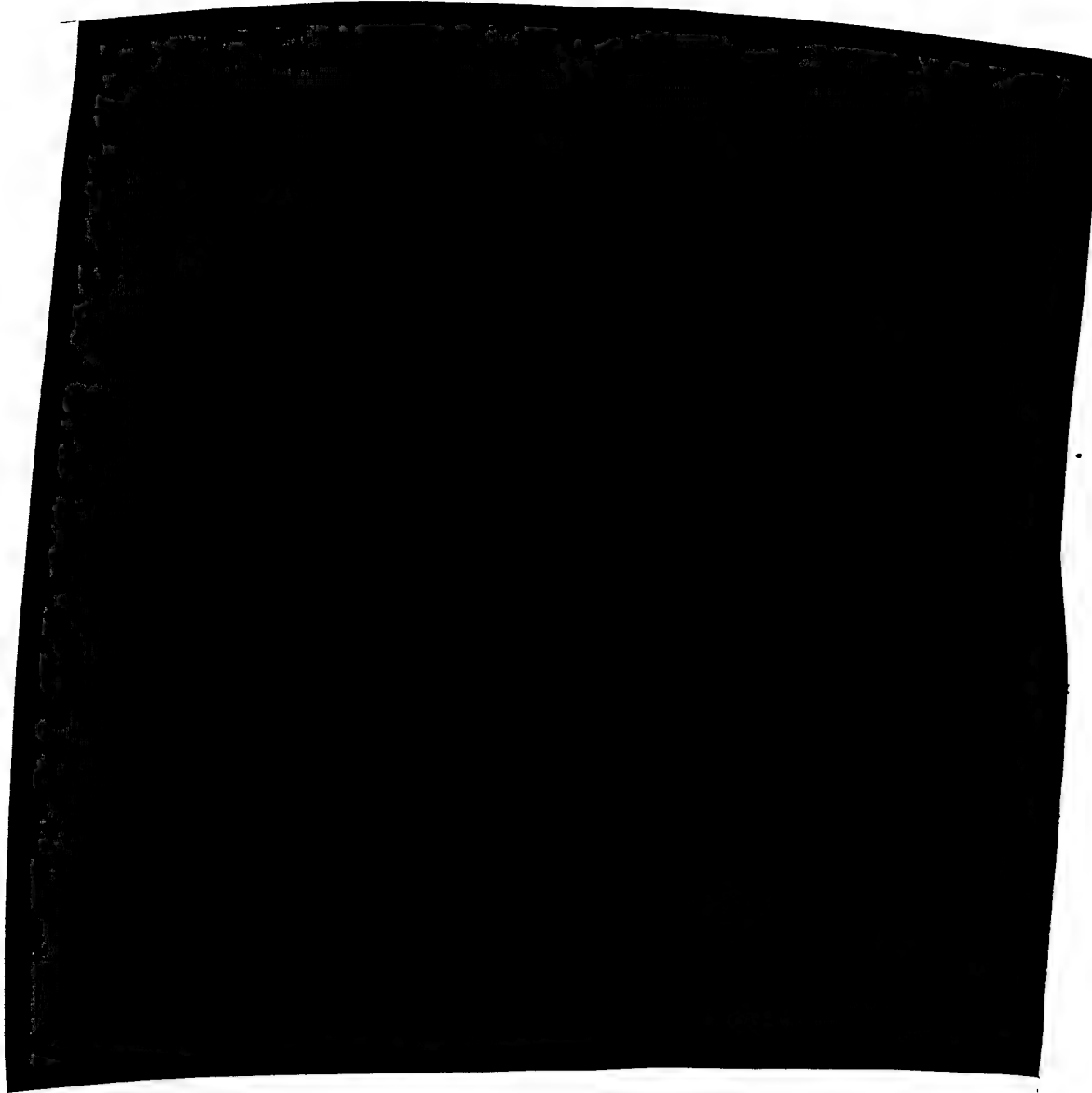


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Lebanon: The Theology of Power and the Power of Theology

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power . . . to strike terror into the hearts of your enemies.

Koran

Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah has long been recognized as the spiritual leader of and political spokesman for Lebanon's Shia Hizballah. His stature as a Shia cleric has grown along with the Hizballah's political and military influence. Fadlallah is easily the most influential of all modern Lebanese Shia clerics—with the possible exception of Musa Sadr, the founder of the Amal movement who disappeared during a visit to Libya and is now believed imprisoned or dead. (S NF)

Fadlallah's Spiritual Odyssey

Born in Najaf, Iraq, in 1935, Fadlallah is the son of a Shia cleric of Lebanese origin. He was educated by some of the best Shia teachers, notably Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim and Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Khoi.¹ When Fadlallah finished his studies, he was ordained a Shia clerical jurisprudent by Ayatollah Khoi. b3

In his youth Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah was a traditionally oriented Shia cleric who desired to minister to the Shias of Lebanon. His experience of the social and political discrimination suffered by Lebanese Shias and their woes during the early years of the Lebanese civil war pushed him toward increasingly radical and activist positions. b3

Fadlallah settled in East Beirut in 1966. He ministered to the Shias and Palestinians of the Nabaa quarter, where he lived, establishing a Shia religious center and a philanthropic-cultural institution, the Brotherly Society for Justice and Culture. At this

¹ Ayatollahs Hakim and Khoi represent the Najaf school, a more quietist tradition within Shia theology that is in many respects at odds with the Qom school of activist Shia clerics represented by Ayatollah Kashani and his pupil Ayatollah Khomeini. b3

time, Fadlallah began work on his major political work, *Islam and the Concept of Power*. Like his brother Shia clerics in Iraq and Iran, Fadlallah has written extensively on the problems of everyday life and their solutions within the framework of Islamic theology in the standard *Explication of the Issues*.² Another of his noteworthy earlier works is *A Method of Preaching Islam Through the Koran*, which combined traditional Shiite scholarship with modern political thought. b3

When the Nabaa quarter of East Beirut fell to the Christian Phalangists in 1976, Fadlallah moved to South Lebanon and served briefly as a cleric with his father, who had settled there after leaving Iraq. Fadlallah shortly returned to the Bir al-Abid quarter of the southern suburbs of Beirut and became the representative in Lebanon of Ayatollah Khoi, founding an orphanage in Khoi's name in the southern suburbs as well as schools and mosques. b3

The rise of Imam Musa Sadr in the Shia community coincided with Fadlallah's gradual conversion to the more activist school. Although rumors abound, there is little evidence to support reports either that Fadlallah and Musa Sadr were rivals, or that Fadlallah was designated to act on Musa Sadr's behalf. Nevertheless, Fadlallah generally remained aloof from the political intrigues that beset Amal following Musa Sadr's disappearance. b3

Musa Sadr's preaching of Shia activism presaged the Shia spiritual and political upheaval that the Iranian revolution would provoke in Lebanon. In 1979, Fadlallah began to move away from the teachings of Ayatollah Khoi—and Khoi's refusal to mix in

² This is the title usually given to Koranic commentaries and similar studies examining the religious aspects of daily life—the work a journeyman cleric must write to establish his reputation as an Islamic scholar and to display his intellectual merit. Some works of this stripe may be entitled *Commentary*, *Explaining the Issues*, or *Explaining the Questions*. They deal, however, with the same material. b3

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b3 politics—by praising the Iranian revolution and announcing that he saw in Khomeini the "source of authority."

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b3 The best example of Fadlallah's new political role came in the creation of the Muslim Students Union, a group of young Shias from the Arab University of Beirut who were inspired by the Iranian revolution. Fadlallah's home in Bir al-Abid became a center for their activity, and his sermons and charisma enabled him to become the Islamic authority to whom they turned for guidance.

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b3 About this time, Fadlallah played an important role in the Lebanese branch of the-Dawa Party, at least by aiding graduates of the Shia religious schools in Najaf and by recruiting other Lebanese members.

b1
b3 The Israeli invasion and the resulting social upheaval in Beirut spurred the growth of Shia extremism in Lebanon. Fadlallah benefited from and contributed to the growing extremism in the Shia community by his bold sermons attacking Israel and, later, the presence of the Multinational Force in Lebanon.

b1
b3 Although Fadlallah's rise to prominence in the Shia community primarily has been a product of his charisma and political acumen, his cause has been sustained by Iran.

Ties to Iran are important to Fadlallah. The Khomeini regime inspires Lebanese Shias, and the longstanding theological ties between Iranian and Lebanese clerics reinforce the linkages between the two countries. The military, financial, and political assistance Iran provides has been a major factor in the creation of Hizballah out of a welter of Lebanese Shia groups and has boosted the organization's ability to control territory.

After some 20 years in Lebanon, Fadlallah has transformed himself from a relatively traditional cleric to one actively involved in national and international politics. We believe Fadlallah seeks to bring about in Lebanon a transformation similar to what he has experienced himself.

Creating a New Shia Man

In *Islam and the Concept of Power* Fadlallah adheres to the basic tenets of messianic Twelver Shiism—the concept of the rightly guided cleric, the role of clerics in Islamic government, the need for clerical intervention to defend the oppressed, and the gestation of a "truly" Muslim community. It is the audacity of Fadlallah's plan to remedy the political predicament of Lebanon's Shia community, outlined in *Islam and the Concept of Power*, that establishes his importance as a Shia political thinker.

b3 Fadlallah aims at a rebirth of Islam in Lebanon. He uses the powerful symbols of Shia theology and early Muslim history—the Prophet's struggles against the unbelievers and the empires of the day, the martyrdom of Imams Ali and Husayn—as well as the example of the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran to remake Lebanese Shias. Fadlallah's "new men," drawn from the politically and economically oppressed Shia lower class, will be molded—under clerical guidance—into warriors the likes of which have not been seen since the golden age of Islam. These warriors will become the vanguard of a new Islamic society.

b3 The first order of business is remedying the Shia's poor perception of himself in order to create the psychological basis for combating tyranny. In his book Fadlallah says he has devoted his life to cultivating unwavering dedication and implacable self-confidence in his charges. He aims to develop followers who will look indifferently at the arsenals of their enemies and who will at the same time see their foes' political weaknesses. Consequently, Fadlallah believes that, although force may claim his followers' lives, it cannot perturb their will and, therefore, will not prevent their ultimate victory.

b3 Fadlallah aims to bring forth defenders of the faith who are indifferent to intimidation, contemptuous of foreign influence, devoted to Shia Islam, and whose self-control borders on fanaticism. Hajj Imad Mughniyah, Fadlallah's former bodyguard, spiritual disciple, and Hizballah security official, may well be an example of Fadlallah's handiwork—a cunning,

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Why Power?

Force tends to convince societies with many members of their power, and, because of that, they are made to lower their guard and rely on their own numbers. They are prevented from fulfilling the other conditions that turn numbers into an agent of strength rather than one of weakness.

A disintegrating society cannot gain from battle, no matter what kind of power it has, because weakness in the social fabric will upset the military balance in favor of the stable, cohesive society, no matter how limited its forces are.

Perhaps some may find it strange that in our study of power, we speak of the issue of government in Islam and the need for complete change in the shape of Islamic life. However, if we ponder the subject deeply, we will find that the research proceeds in the framework of a familiar concept to many Muslims, the concept of change through force as something contrary to the Islamic line because the idea of government in these ages is not an Islamic thing.

Rather, by some accounts, it is prohibited on the practical level because it endangers the safety of individual Muslims when they stand in confrontation with the infidel oppressor. This is the point of view of many Muslim thinkers and others, who, as they understand Islam as a personal and individual endeavor, do not approach the task of shaping society, let alone shaping the state.

There is yet another point of view that holds that God did not leave life in an Islamic vacuum. For if Islam is the final law of God concerning life, then we absolutely must apply it on all levels. We must search for suitable means to do that on the basis of the original Islamic experience, which at times practiced kindness and at other times violence, and on the basis of Koranic verses and sayings of the Prophet which come up in the Sunnah, which did not specify the limits of the resort to force with respect to time or place.

From the preface to Islam
and the Concept of Power

resourceful, coldly calculating adversary for whom virtually any act of violence or revenge performed in the name of Shiism is permissible. b3

The Hizballah: Political Vanguard and Terrorist Arm

The Hizballah is the precursor of the intended Lebanese Islamic republic. *Islam and the Concept of Power* is supplied with numerous Koranic citations that tell of the victory of outnumbered believers over a more numerous enemy. Fadlallah preaches to his followers that, when they righteously fight oppressors, they are armed with spiritual power, as was Moses against Pharaoh, David against Goliath, and Muhammad against the infidels. b3

The growth of the Hizballah's political and military capabilities underscores Fadlallah's success in bringing forth the kind of Shia warrior his political vision requires. b3

Through the Hizballah, Fadlallah reveals the darker side of his political ideology, as well as a realistic appraisal of the Lebanese political situation: the use of violence is a necessity. b3

In keeping with the political manifesto Hizballah has issued, Fadlallah's followers have been actively involved in combating foreign influences in Lebanon. In southern Lebanon, Hizballah has politically and militarily opposed the Israeli presence. In Beirut, the Hizballah's measures against the West have been even more spectacular and have revealed where

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Fadlallah on Violence

"Islam has told man of his responsibility to fight for the sake of God with his goods and his person and to fight the groups that stand in the way of God's path, for there is nothing but this path, in which man must use his ability, for this is the nature of faith. . . . For this reason the important values in life embodied by Islam in its legislation, interpretations, and practical plans for the growth of life were in harmony with God's creation and took precedence in legislation, for when values were placed on one side and the lives of followers and enemies on the other, there was no doubt. One of them had to lose, since, for life to continue to follow God's values, many martyrs and enemies would have to fall along the way. For this reason alone, we understand how killing can be a great ethical value instead of a hideous crime."

A passage from the Koran cited by Fadlallah:

"Think not of those who are killed for God's sake as dead. They live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. They rejoice in the bounty provided by God. Regarding those left behind, who have not yet joined them, the martyrs glory in the fact that they have no fear nor cause to grieve."

Fadlallah draws the line concerning the use of violence. We believe that the principle that guides Hizballah in its attacks is the degree to which the foreign presence threatens the Shia community—and its Hizballah vanguard. We judge that Fadlallah condones only violence that responds directly to a perceived threat. Accordingly, we judge that Fadlallah would have approved of the suicide bombings of the US Marine barracks and similar attacks against the Multinational Force in Beirut because their presence constituted a clear threat to the Hizballah and the Shia community. b3

The willingness of the Hizballah to undertake audacious attacks against powerful foes underscores the presence of the psychological characteristics

Fadlallah seeks in his followers. It furthers the Shia myth of the outnumbered and beleaguered believers taking on—and ultimately prevailing over—a superior infidel adversary and, in our view, boosts the Hizballah's prestige and aids in recruiting more followers. b3

Fadlallah's Islamic State

Fadlallah's other works, and numerous interviews, Shaykh Fadlallah seems in no hurry to implement an Islamic republic in Lebanon. His writings indicate that the preconditions for an Islamic state have not yet been met. Two organizations, Amal and the Hizballah, compete for the loyalty of Lebanon's Shia community. We believe that, if only for this reason, Hizballah has been working to infiltrate Amal and subvert its leadership. Only when the Shia community has a unified leadership and has built its strength can an Islamic republic go forward. b3

Once the Hizballah decides to proceed with the creation of an Islamic state, the ultimate authority to make decisions will be the clergy, even though clerical power would be exercised indirectly. Clerics—acting in their clerical role as ministers—may not legislate but would be responsible for arbitrating disputes, settling disagreements, and passing judgment concerning the Islamic legitimacy of governmental actions. All authority, as in Iran, would devolve from the preeminent cleric: the source of authority. b3

Fadlallah sees himself as this source of authority. For the time being, there seems to be no other Shia cleric—Musa Sadr excluded—who has attained Fadlallah's stature. We believe that, if the Hizballah continues on its present path, Fadlallah will be clearly identifiable as the Lebanese equivalent of Khomeini. b3

Nonetheless, despite Hizballah's debt to Tehran, Fadlallah probably will not completely imitate the Iranian model. Although he has left behind many aspects of the quietist tradition in which he was schooled, Fadlallah has not yet fully embraced the

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Iranian school of thought that virtually equates Khomeini with the Mahdi—the 12th Imam who is in occultation. b3

One implication of this difference in theological emphasis may well be that a Lebanese "source of authority" would find it more difficult to take the kinds of measures Iran has taken against its minorities. Consequently, for the Christians at least, a Lebanese Islamic republic, although distasteful, would not replicate the Iranian persecution of minorities like the Bahai. b3

Fadlallah stands opposed, on religious grounds, to granting political concessions to Christians, other than the Islamically prescribed status of protected peoples. In recent statements to the Lebanese press, however, Fadlallah has taken a more conciliatory tone, claiming that there is no contradiction between the establishment of an Islamic state and a continuing Christian presence in Lebanon. In our view, Fadlallah's goal is the submission of the Christians to the more numerous Shias and their Islamic republic, but, if this state of affairs does not materialize, in the long run he is willing to drive out those who do not cooperate. We believe that the Druze minority—regarded as Muslim heretics—would be more likely to receive the same kind of treatment the Bahai experienced under the Iranian Islamic republic. b3

Flaws in Fadlallah's Islamic Ideology

Islam and the Concept of Power is an eloquently argued example of Shia political rhetoric, but it suffers from the weaknesses that plague idealist tracts. The most important concern the realities of the Lebanese political equation. Others are the reactions of Lebanon's powerful neighbors—Syria and Israel—to the intended Islamic republic and the possibility of a conflict of legitimacy between the Islamic republics of Iran and Lebanon. b3

How many Lebanese Sunnis will accept the establishment of a Shia Islamic state? If the historical experience of the Lebanese civil war is a guide, the acquiescence of Sunnis will be a serious problem. Many, such as the adherents of the fundamentalist and pro-Iranian Islamic Unification Movement, will be attracted to Fadlallah's new Lebanon. More

secular-oriented Sunnis almost certainly will join its enemies. Will Fadlallah's true believers be forced to confront these Muslims as those who side with the infidels, or will they coexist? Given the willingness of the cosmopolitan Lebanese Sunnis to seek a more sophisticated social environment than that proposed by the fundamentalists, the Lebanese Sunnis are unlikely to become mainstays of Fadlallah's new Islamic state. b3

The Christians and the Druze are well along in the process of carving out their own ministates. Fadlallah's believers are not likely to succeed in incorporating these groups into Islamic Lebanon, since these two important actors have the most formidable militias in Lebanon. There is little prospect that the Christians and the Druze will accept the second-class status such groups would be offered under an Islamic government. b3


Although the Shias of Lebanon are a majority in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and West Beirut, the geographical dispersion of these areas—unlike the self-contained ministates of the Druze and the Christians—means that the intervening territory would need to be controlled by Shias to ensure the integrity of both the predecessor to Islamic Lebanon and the Islamic republic itself. It is highly unlikely that the geographical integration of the Shia cantons could take place without a confrontation with the Druze, the outcome of which would be very much in doubt. Without the integration of the Shia areas, the viability of a Shia minstate, much less an Islamic republic, would be open to question. b3

One of Syria's key policy goals in Lebanon is to prevent Lebanon from becoming a base of subversion against Syria. In our judgment, the creation of a fundamentalist state in Lebanon would increase the possibility that Lebanese Shias and fundamentalist Sunnis could cooperate with similar elements in Syria, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Although Damascus regards the Hizballah as a group engaged in the struggle against Israel, it also sees the fundamentalists as a long-term threat to Syrian interests. Should the Hizballah prosper, Damascus could be forced to confront the issue of whether to strangle an infant Islamic state in its crib. b3

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The development of the Hizballah infrastructure in southern Lebanon poses a threat to Israeli's northern settlements.




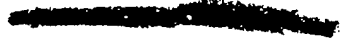
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Outlook

Fadlallah's concept of a Lebanese Islamic republic is uniquely Lebanese, and his political activity reflects both modern currents in Shia political thought and the interests of his Lebanese political constituency. Hizballah's political and military tactics in its formative years have been largely in response to other actors who practice violence. We believe that Hizballah's early experience, despite Fadlallah's often conciliatory rhetoric, indicates that an Islamic republic in Lebanon can be established only by violent means.

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Fadlallah's ultimate political goals seem unattainable, but the religious goal of an Islamic republic could be a Lebanese version of the classic Shia mythology of the righteous confronting tyranny. In Fadlallah's view, it is good that the faithful have banded together to create an Islamic community fighting against the global Satans. Similarly, it is good that the Lebanese Shias can rejoice in their martyrdom, because fighting for the creation of an Islamic republic has led many of Fadlallah's flock to turn away from Western-inspired corruption, to submit to God and His mercy. Fadlallah's followers almost certainly will continue to press for its establishment, but, in terms of their own Shia dogma, they have already won their victory.

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Iran's Bazaar Merchants: Challenging Regime Policies

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Many Iranian bazaar merchants oppose government efforts to increase supervision and regulation of the economy and have responded by electing more conservative, tradition-minded clerics to the Majles, Iran's parliament. The success of the *bazaaris*' efforts and the deteriorating economy have forced the government to compromise on several key domestic economic issues. When Khomeini dies, the *bazaaris* may face tougher treatment because he has restrained regime radicals, who see the *bazaaris* as part of the unjust economic order they want to abolish.

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Background

The *bazaaris* played an important part in bringing the Khomeini regime to power. Outraged at the Shah's efforts to undermine their traditional role and status in Iranian society, the *bazaaris* bankrolled the clerical opposition and helped rally popular support for the revolution.

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Despite their initial support for the new regime, we believe that a majority of *bazaaris* have been alienated by the ruling clerics' efforts to expand government control over the private sector. The *bazaaris* fear that greater government control will lead to socialism and believe the regime's policies have significantly contributed to Iran's economic problems.

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The *bazaaris* and their conservative allies have used their increased strength to challenge the radicals on a range of issues. This bloc led the Majles to reject four of radical Prime Minister Musavi's Cabinet appointments in 1984, nearly forcing the government to resign. They also headed the fight last year against new tax legislation and refused to vote for Musavi's reelection last October, despite Khomeini's endorsement.

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A Portrait of the Bazaar

The bazaar seemed immense. And because it was covered and somewhat dark, expeditions to the bazaar had a solemnity that other forms of shopping lacked. From the outside the bazaar, with its great gates, which were opened in the morning and closed at night, seemed bounded and defined. From the inside it appeared boundless and inexhaustible. It was a place of manufacture as well as sale, and it seemed more like a labyrinth because of its endless turnings, its abrupt changes from retailer to workshop and from alley to avenue. For example, the quiet street where cloth merchants sat among their bolts of material opened onto an avenue where the clatter from the coppersmiths sometimes made it impossible to talk.

To enter the bazaar was to enter a world of slow formalities and quick wits. It was also a world of old, even ancestral, loyalties. In general it was loyalty that directed a customer's steps. Whether it was in the small lane of the jewelers or the spacious, barrel vaulted central avenue of the cloth dealers, shoppers always went to the same merchant in any section, a reliable friend of the family.

The bazaar and the mosque are the two lungs of public life in Iran. Bazaars, like mosques, shrines, and private houses, look inward, psychologically and

architecturally, and more often than not they present bland and unexplained walls to the street outside. Bazaars, however, have a public character that is the antithesis of the privacy of houses. For over a thousand years the bazaar has been recognized by Islamic law as a special arena of human life.

In theory relations between mosque and bazaar are friendly; in practice they sometimes face problems. Merchants have not always liked the justice of the mullah courts (which in turn sometimes have depended on government for the execution of their decrees). Some bazaaris are patrons of forms of popular religious expression which some mullahs disapprove of.

Nonetheless, the religious establishment and the bazaar give each other shape and sustenance. To be successful, especially in commercial dealings over the long term, the merchant has needed the capital of a good reputation as much as he has needed material capital. If a Muslim is to have a good reputation, he must pay taxes to the mosque and seek the spiritual guidance of a mullah.

*The Mantle of the Prophet
by Roy Mottahedeh*

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Outlook

The continuing deterioration in the economy brought on by the war, lower oil prices, and government mismanagement are likely to increase *bazaaris* disenchantment with the regime and spur the merchants to play a more aggressive political role.

The Majles election in 1988 will provide *bazaaris* an opportunity to increase the size of the conservative bloc and possibly even to force changes in the radical-dominated Cabinet.

The *bazaaris* will come under increased attack from radicals once Khomeini is gone. Radicals in the regime already blame the *bazaaris* for profiteering from Iran's problems. We believe Khomeini, despite his sympathy for many of the radicals' policies, is a moderating influence because he fears that domination by the radicals or the conservatives would risk a civil war that could destroy the Islamic republic. After Khomeini dies, no one is likely to have the combination of unquestioned authority and political skills needed to contain the radicals.

Over the longer term, the *bazaaris* are likely to face problems similar to those encountered under the Shah. Once the war is over and when oil earnings begin to recover, the regime probably will focus its energies on modernizing and developing Iran's economy, which again will force the bazaar to compete with technocrats and new industrialists who may prove better able to maneuver in a less traditional economic environment.

Government Accommodation

The *bazaaris*' success in the 1984 Majles election and the deteriorating economy have prompted the regime to give stronger public and private support to *bazaaris* concerns. Since late 1984, Khomeini's speeches have emphasized the need to limit government interference in the private sector and to respect the role of the bazaar in Iranian society. More recently, the regime appears to be tailoring its economic policies to meet bazaar interests. The Iranian press reports that *bazaaris* now hold seats on committees that formulate trade policy, and last year a prominent *bazaari* headed a delegation to Africa to assess economic opportunities. Iranian diplomatic posts have been instructed to cooperate more closely with bazaar commercial representatives, according to the Iranian press.

The regime also has eased its efforts to monitor *bazaaris* violations of price controls. The Supreme Judicial Council announced last May that the "price patrols" and the special price oversight board were being disbanded because of *bazaaris* complaints that they were hurting business.

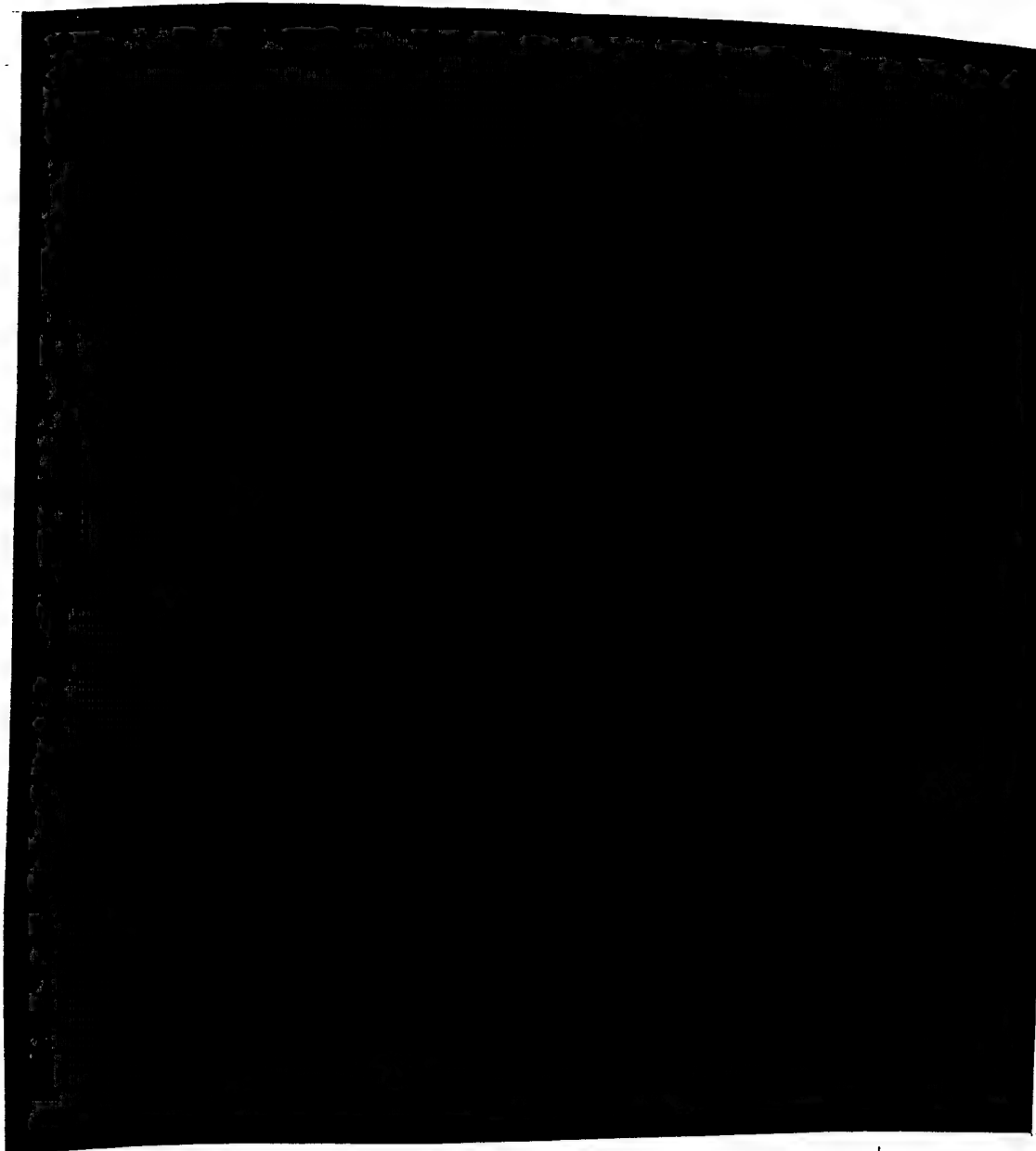
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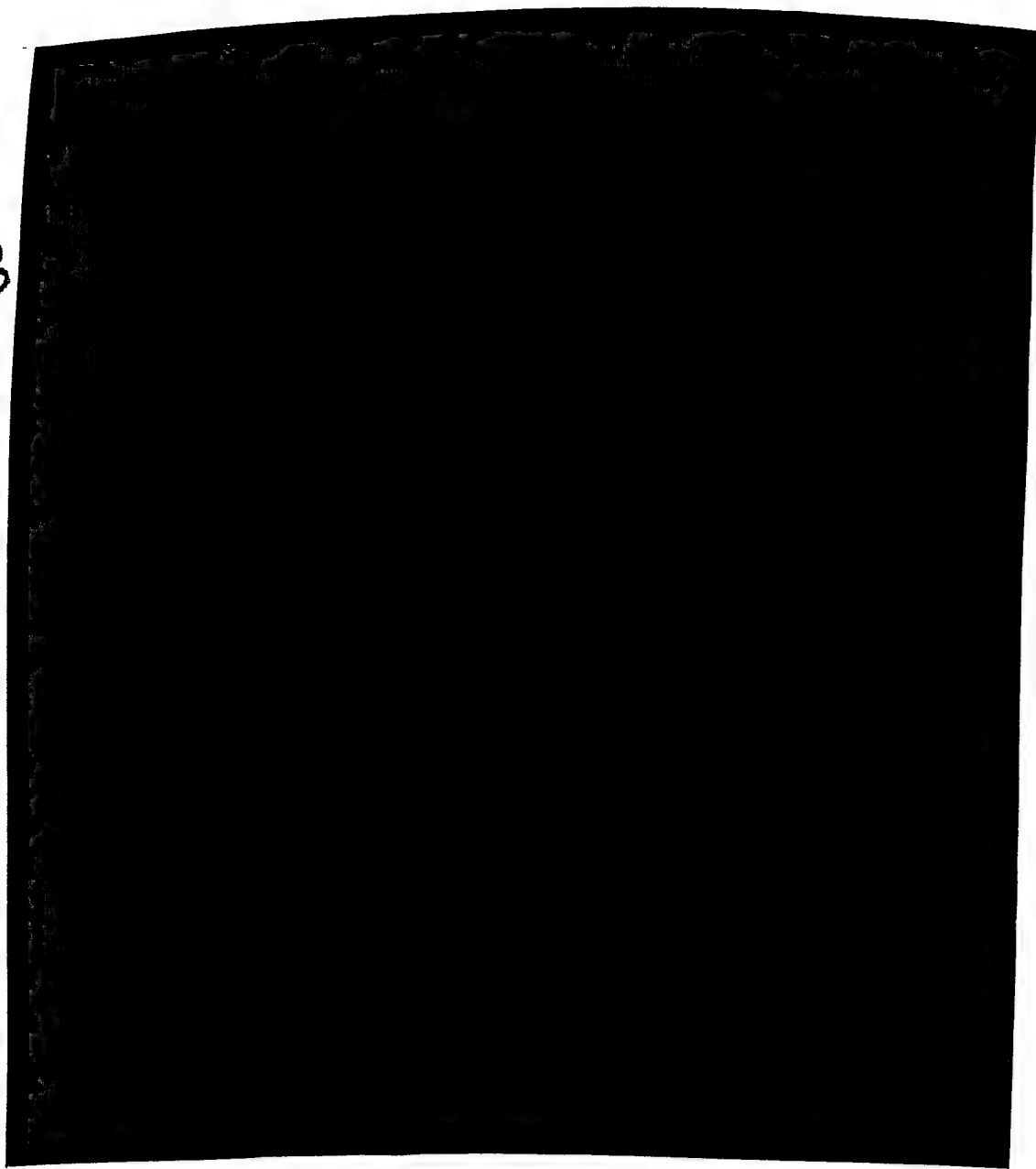
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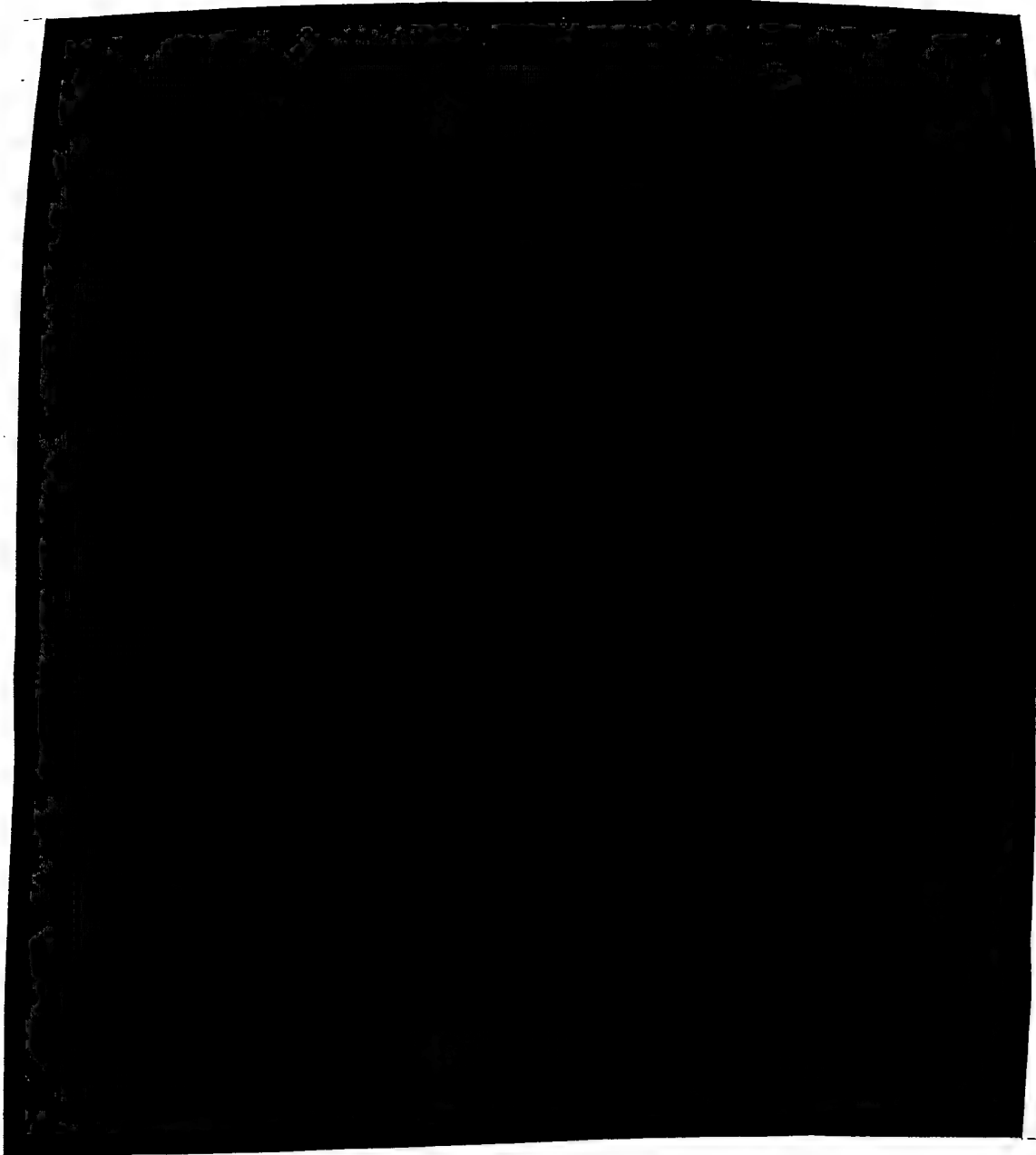
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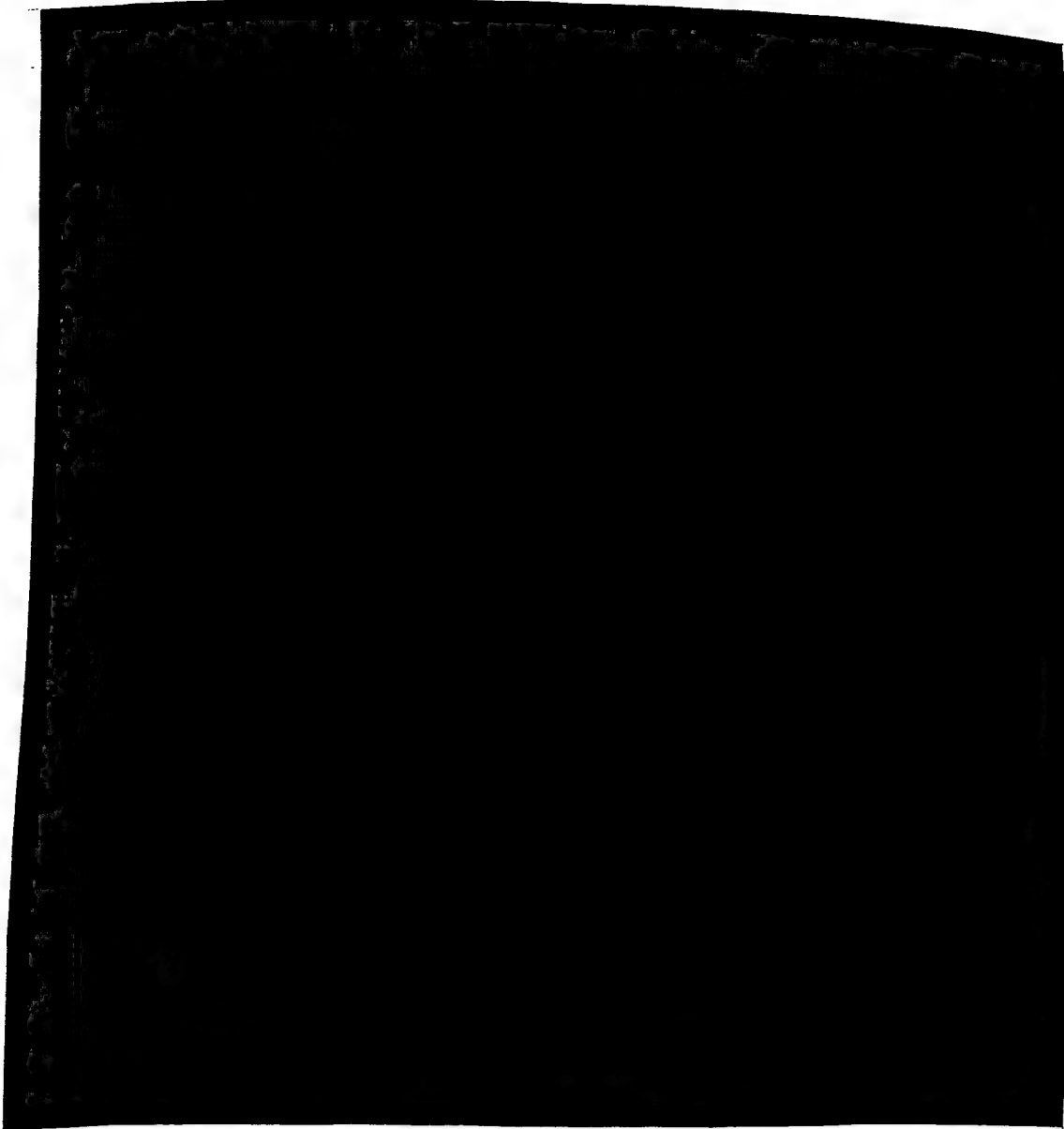
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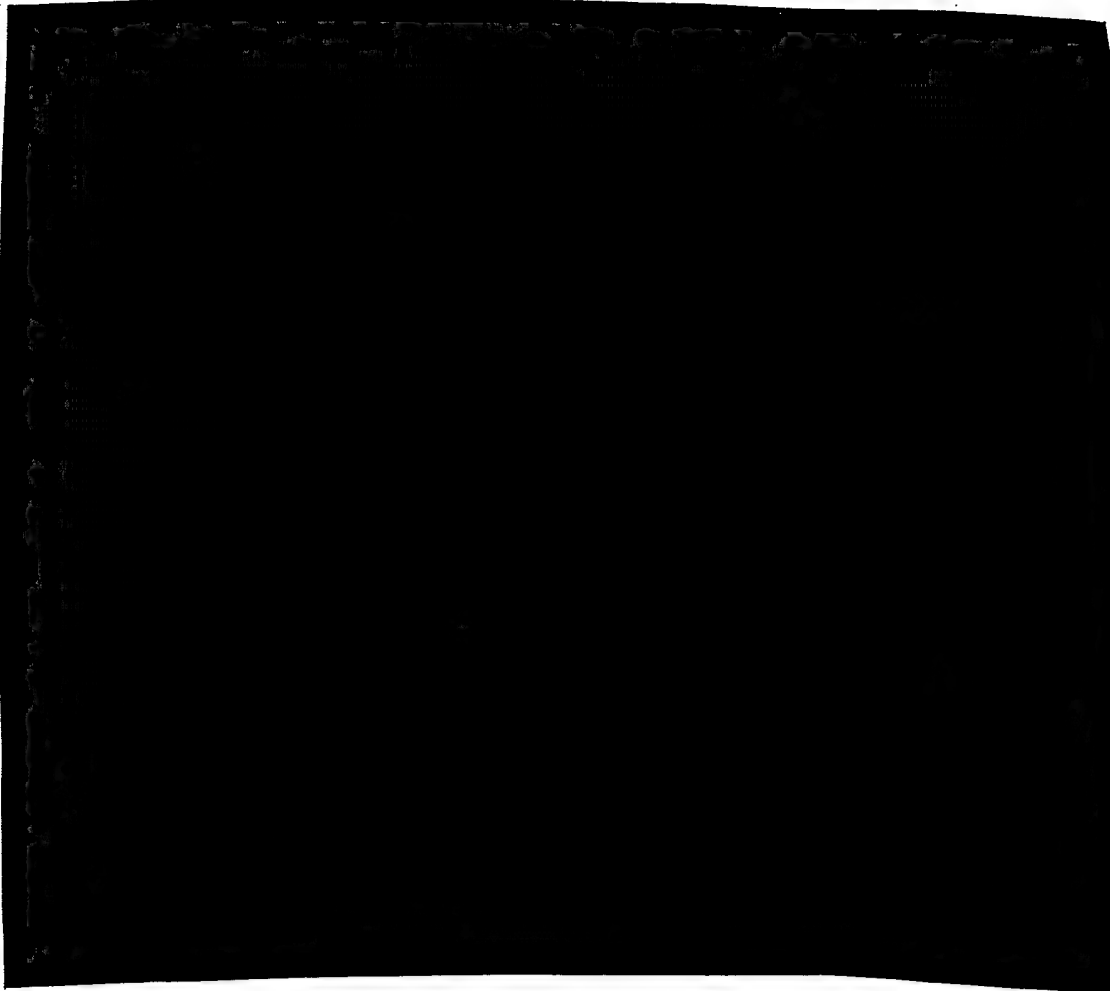
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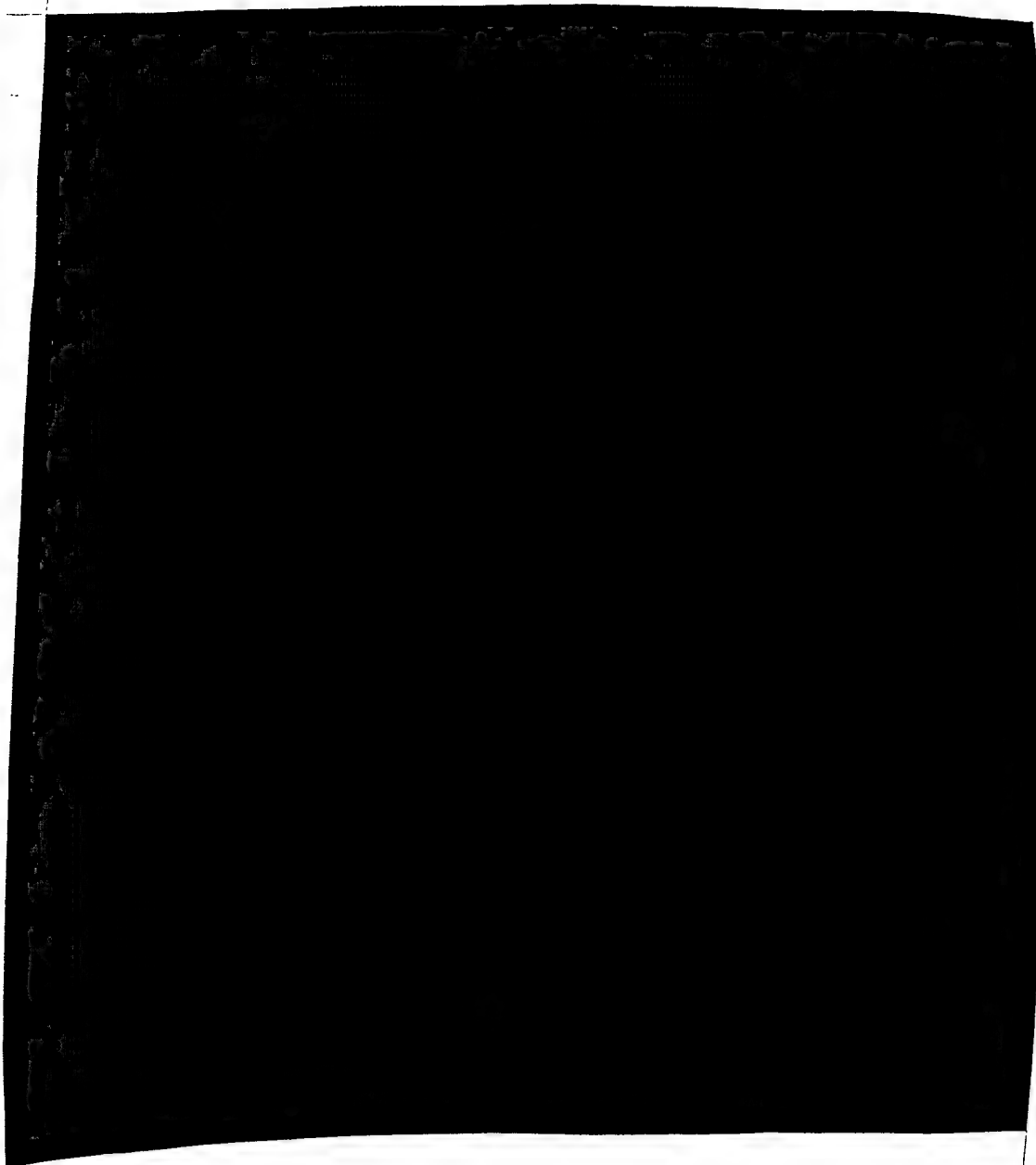
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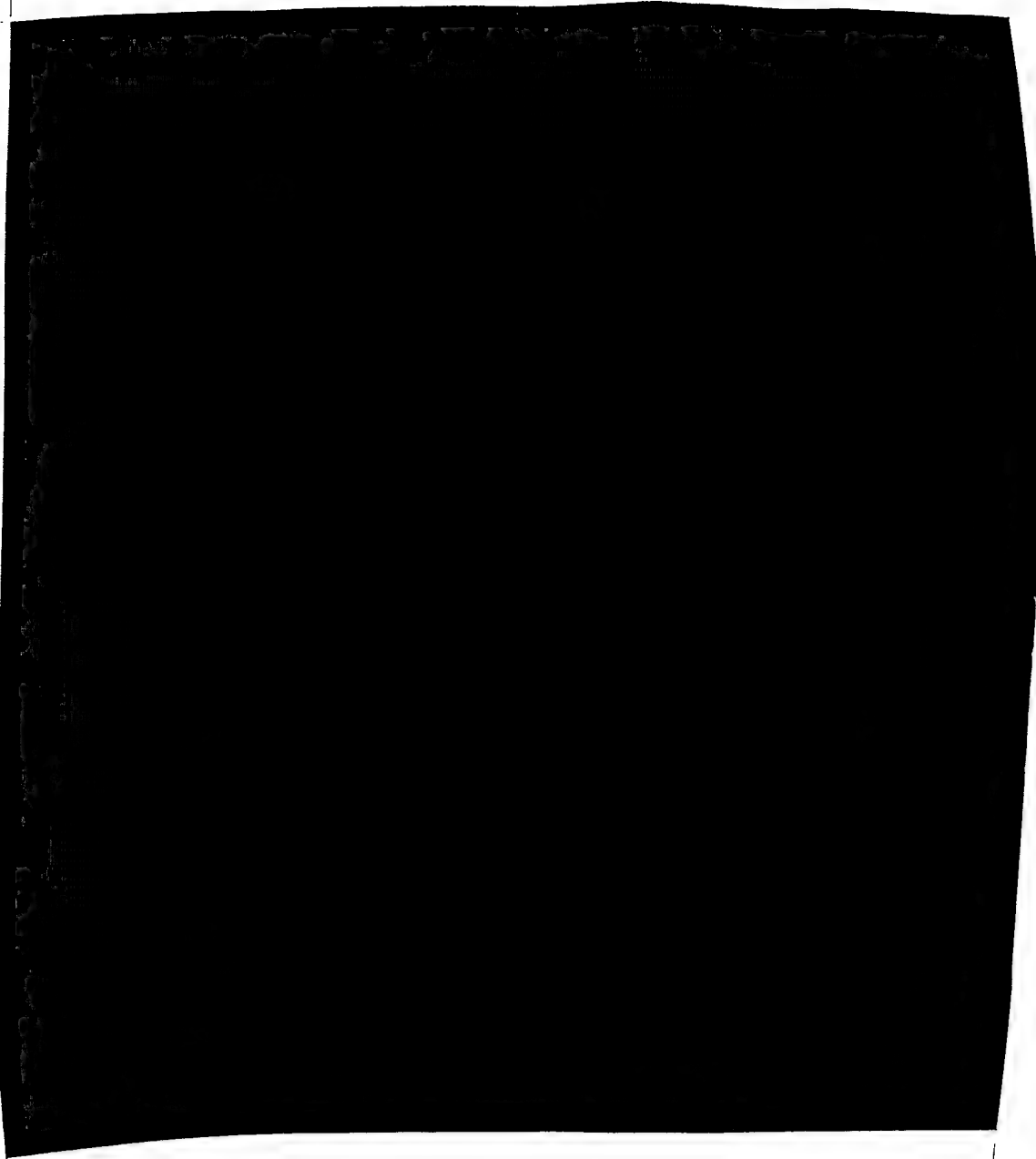
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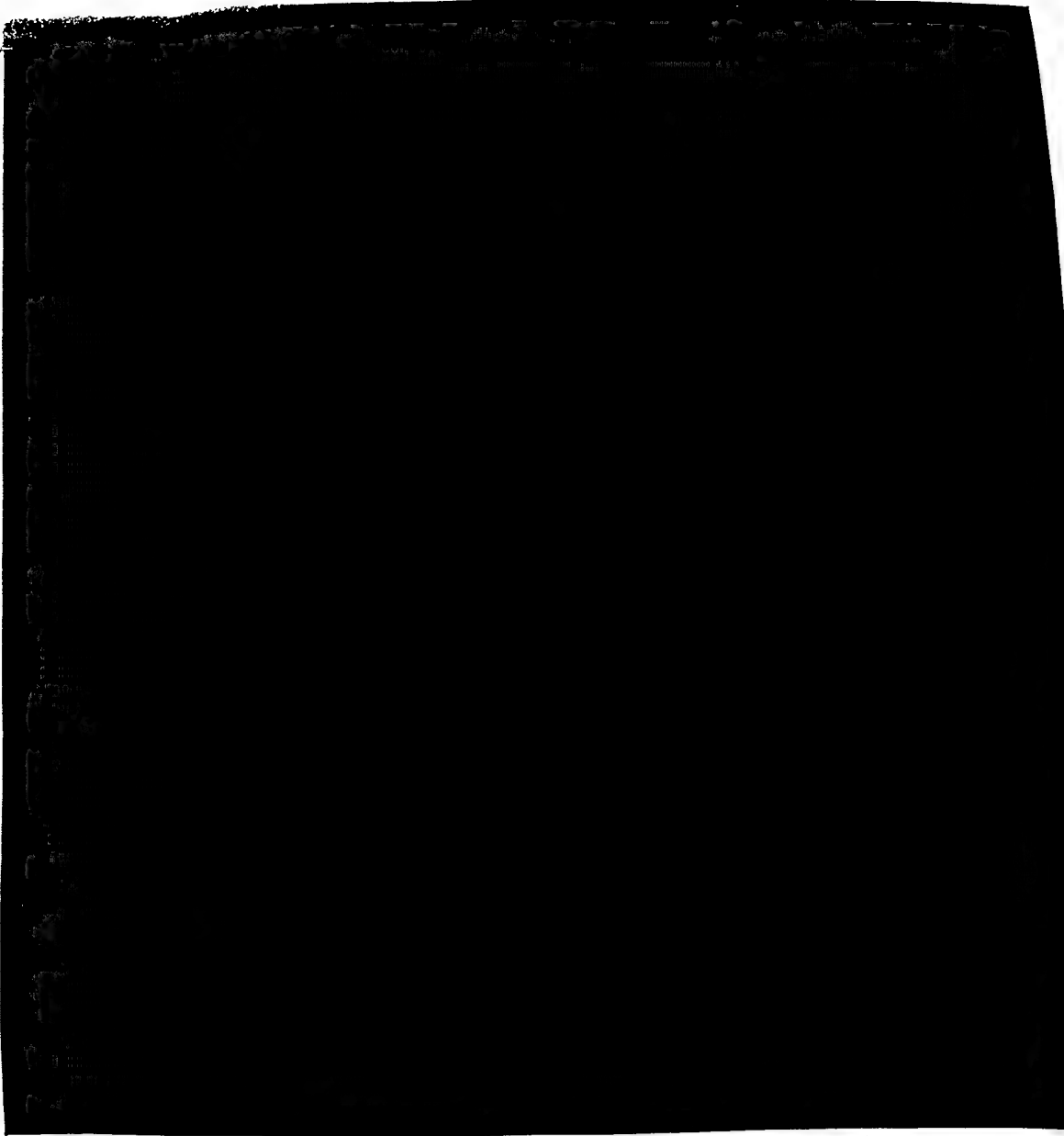
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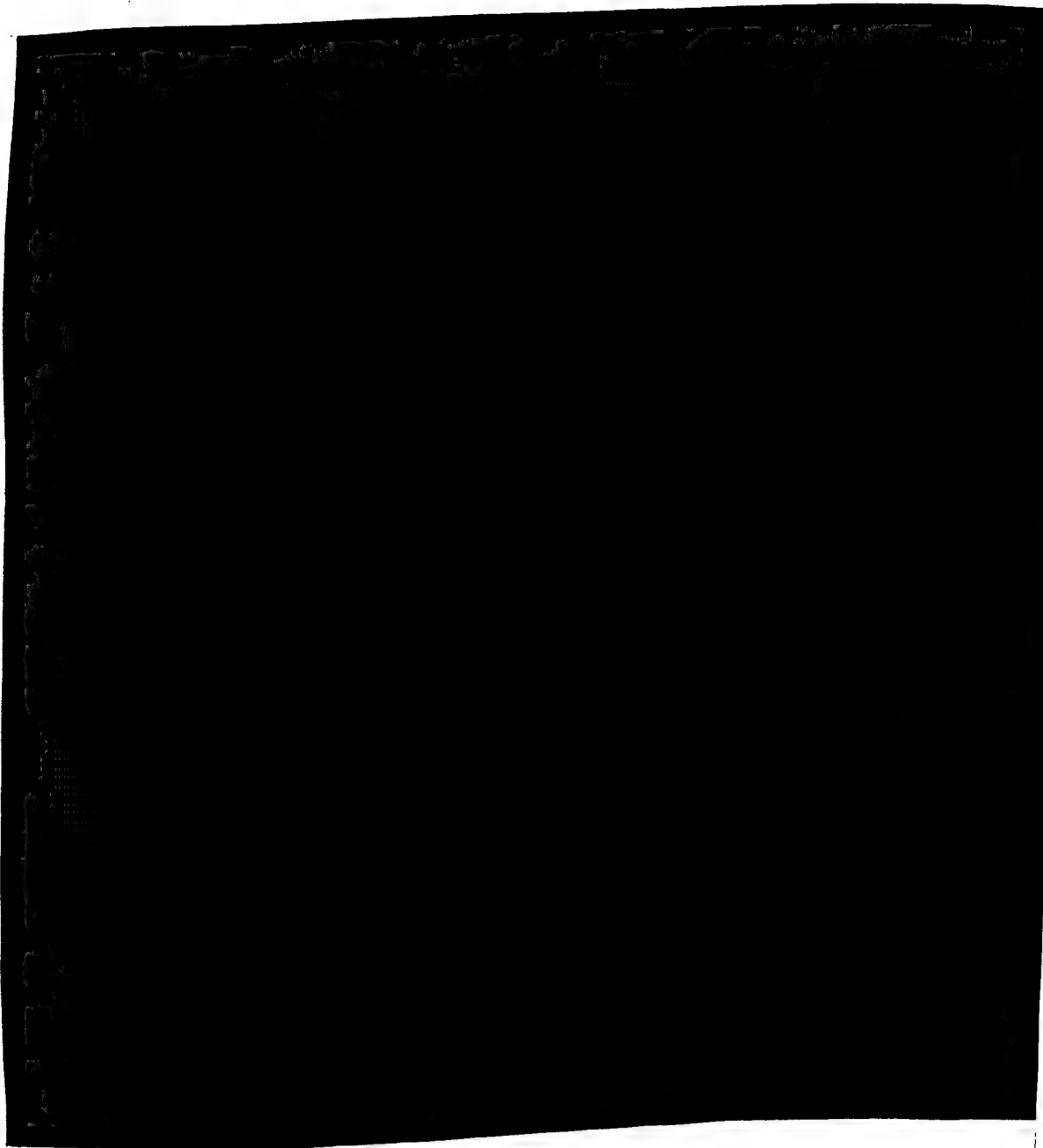
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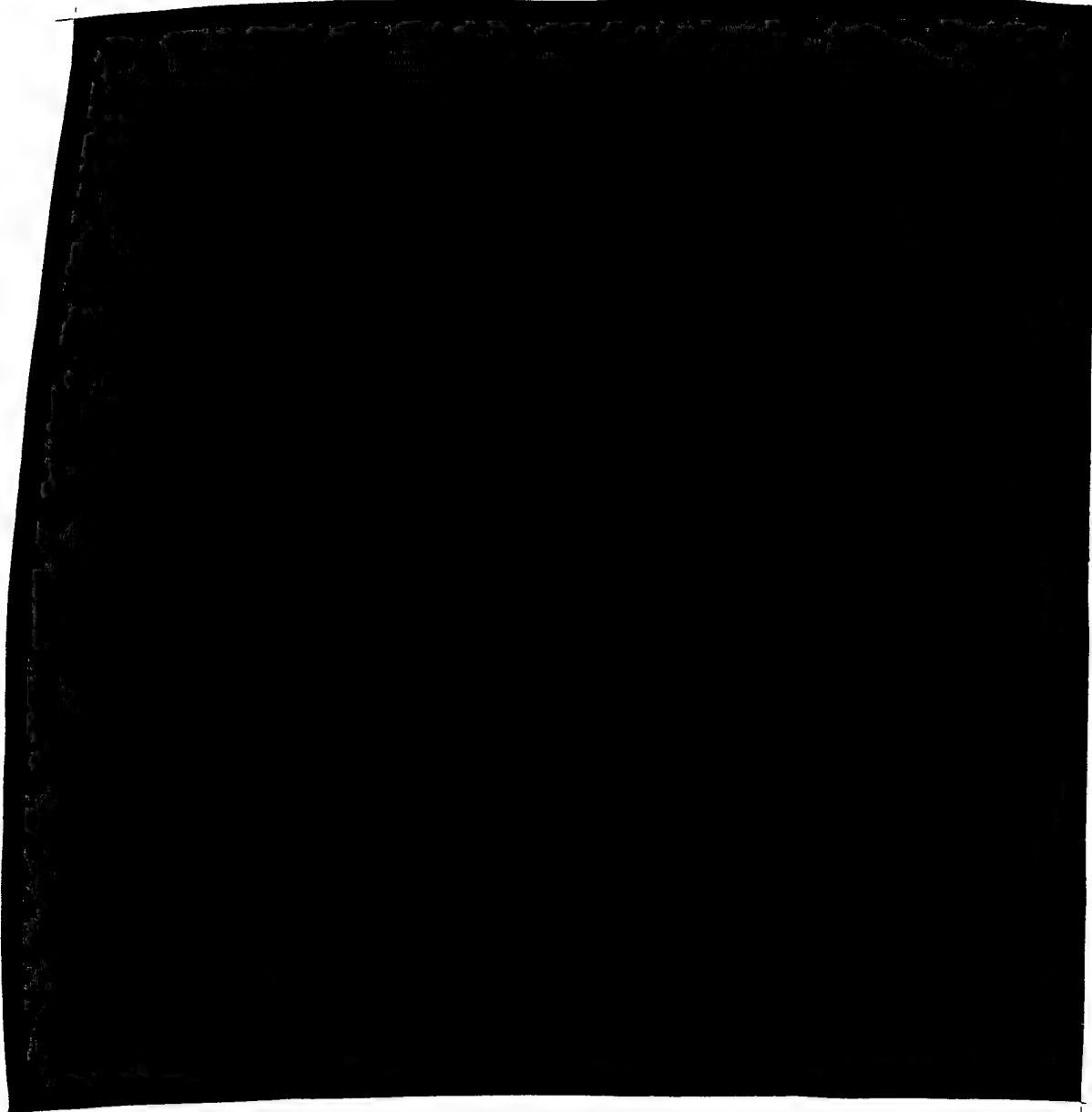
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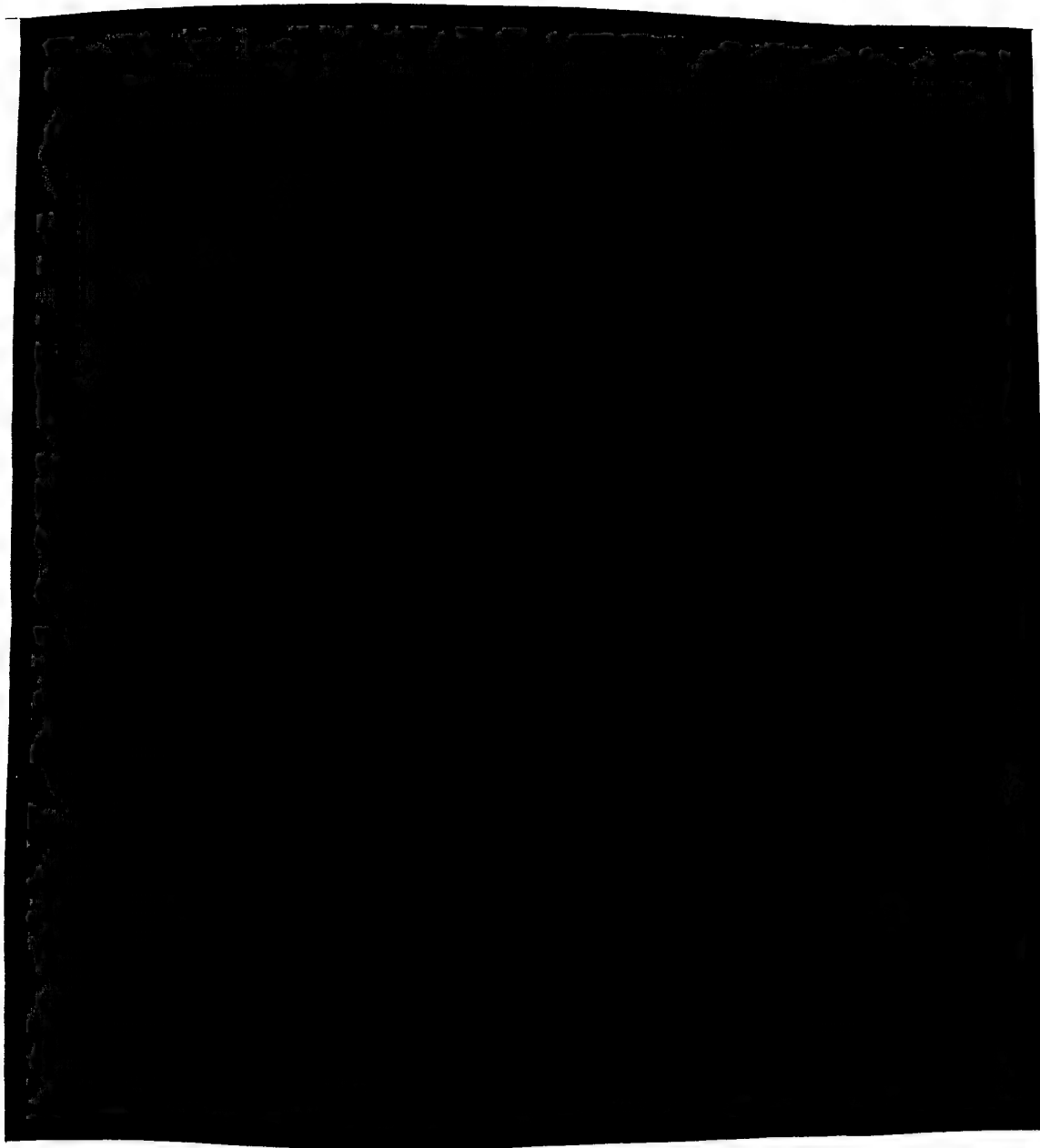


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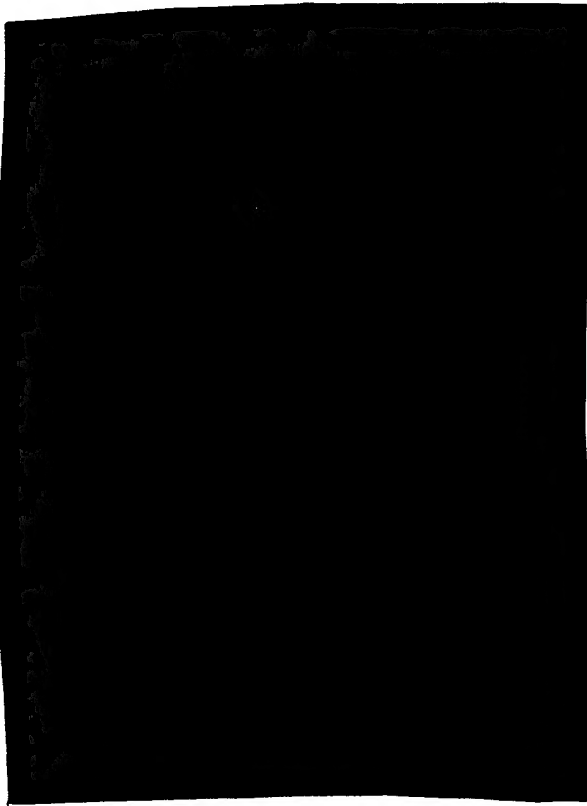
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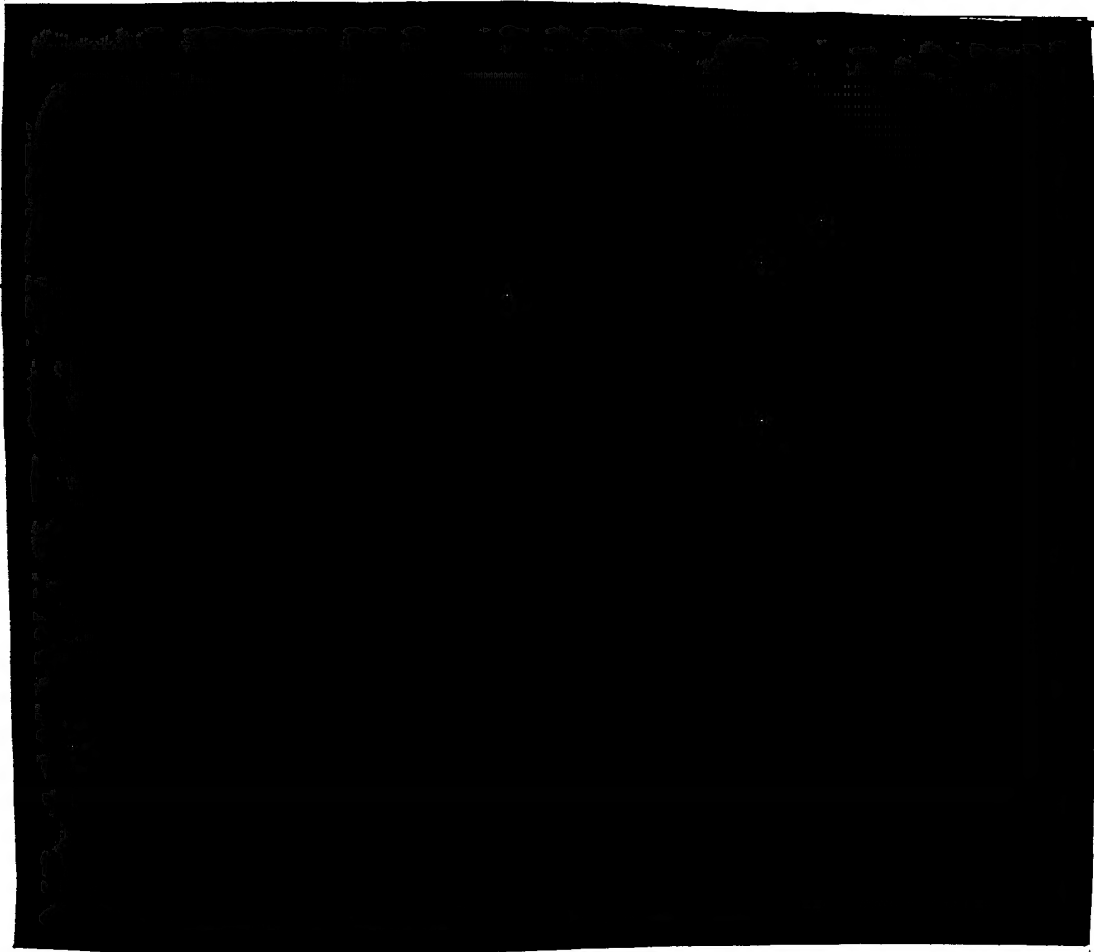
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Near East and
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Regional Organizations

Economic Difficulties

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The Arab League and the Islamic Conference Organization face significant financial problems that could undermine their activities. More than half of the Arab League's 21 members have not paid dues to support this year's budget of over \$30 million.

Several states have been delinquent for more than a year—reflecting domestic economic problems caused by the weak oil market and the regional recession. We believe that some members have also reduced contributions to underscore their dissatisfaction with the League's ineffectiveness.

The secretaries general of both groups have threatened to withhold employee salaries to force members to fulfill their obligations. The Arab League has delayed paying bills, stopped the activities of some subsidiary organizations, and reduced hiring. Secretary General Klibi almost certainly will raise the League's financial problems at a ministerial meeting in September. A continued lack of funds is likely to compound the effects of political disunity in Arab and Islamic ranks and erode both groups' regional and international influence.

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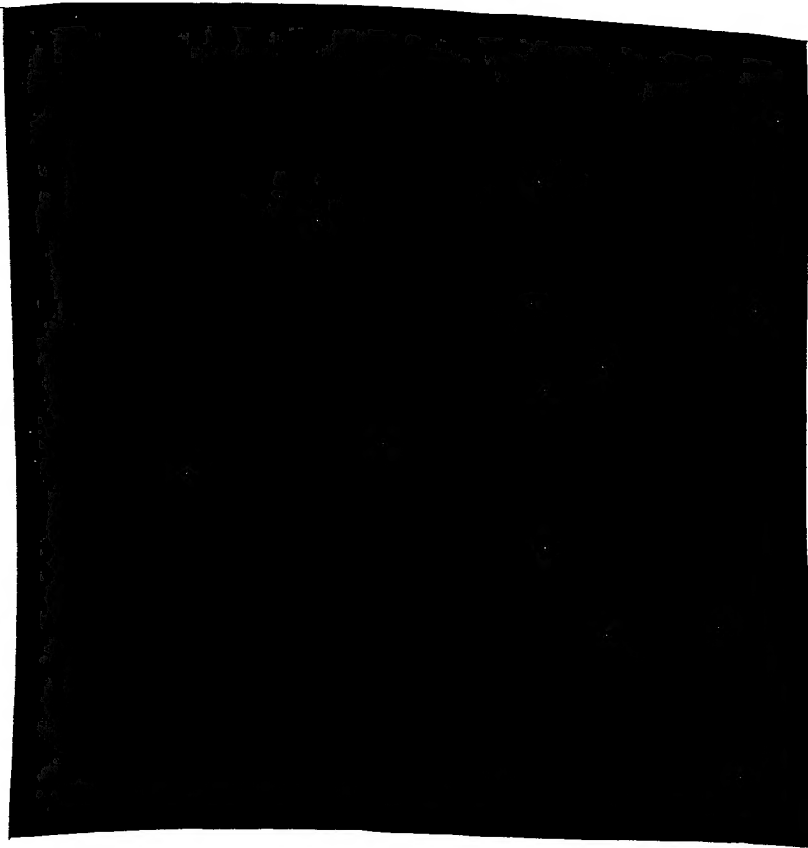
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